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# THE BOY'S VOICE

*J. SPENCER CURWEN.*





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THE BOY'S VOICE.





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# THE BOY'S VOICE.

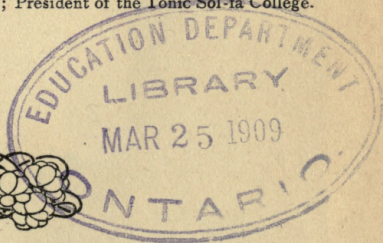
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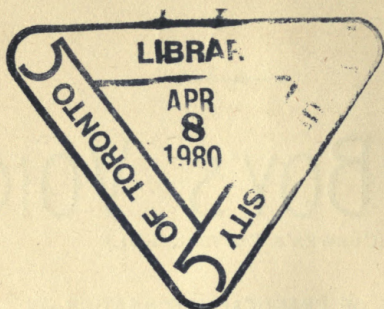
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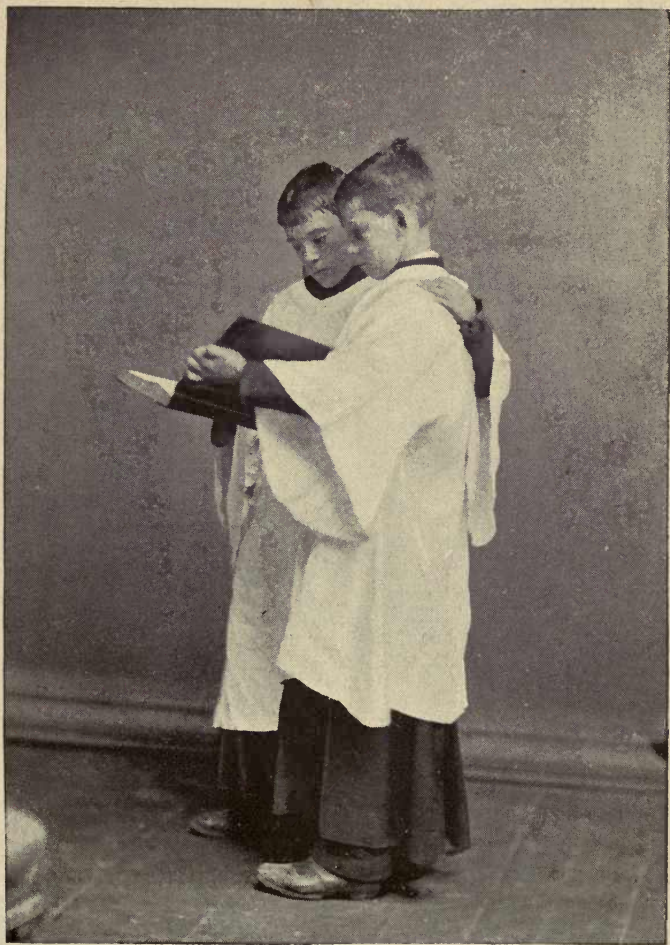
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*CHORISTER BOYS.*

*Photographed by Mr. George Hadley, Lincoln.*





## PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION.

COMPLAINTS have reached me, both in reviews and private letters, of the heterogeneous character of this book; the varied, and sometimes contradictory, advice that it contains. "Why does the author not give us his own views?" I am convinced, however, that the plan of the book is a wise one, and the rapid sale of the first edition is good evidence in its favour. The endeavour has been to gather the best opinion and experience from all sides, arrange it, and serve it up with explanatory comment, delivering, as a rule, my own verdict on the evidence. The difficulty of discussing on paper a matter which is so pre-eminently actual and oral as voice-training and singing, is very great. All the more reason, therefore, why many should take part in it, and varied powers of description be employed.

*May, 1894.*

J. S. C.

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## PREFACE TO THE THIRD EDITION.

I HAVE taken the opportunity afforded by a call for a reprint, to get my friend, Mr. G. Bernard Gilbert, F.R.C.O., the Borough Organist of West Ham, to revise thoroughly the list of Concert Songs for Boys (Chap. XVI), and bring it up to date. Mr. Gilbert, who is a highly skilled trainer of boys' voices, has produced a book of voice exercises, entitled "Voice-training Exercises for Boys," which I can strongly recommend for use with this book.

To Chaps. XI and XII considerable additions have been made, relating to the work of Dr. Z. Buck, Dr. Huntley, Dr. Madeley Richardson, &c.

As to Chap. XIV, I have issued a circular to all the schools for choristers mentioned, and by the kind co-operation of the clergy and organists concerned, have recorded all the changes that have taken place.

Chap. XV, describing Mr. Bates's important Training School for Choristers, is entirely new.

A few slight emendations in the text have also been made.

*December, 1899.*

J. S. C.

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## CHAPTER I.

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### THE HEALTHFULNESS OF SINGING.

THE boy's voice, though an immature organ of delicate structure, is capable of much work, providing only that its mechanism be rightly used and not forced. Some people are unnecessarily nervous about boys; as a rule, under competent guidance, they will get nothing but good from vocal work. A cathedral organist wrote to me the other day:—

“Our best solo boy, who has a splendid voice and who sings beautifully, has been unwell, and the Dean and Chapter doctor (who has an idea that every choir-boy should be as robust as a plough-boy) has just stated that the boy is too feeble to remain in the choir. Notwithstanding my remonstrances, the Dean and Chapter decided yesterday to uphold the doctor. I tried his voice last week, and he sang with full, rich tone up to the C above the stave, and that after he had been skating from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. I should have thought that a boy who could skate all day could not be in such a ‘feeble’ state as represented by the medical man. Three months ago a boy with a beautiful voice was sent away for the same reason. So you see what uphill work it is for me.”

It is to be hoped that fastidiousness of this sort is not common. The *abuse* of the voice may lead, of course, to serious results. In the *New York Medical Record* of March 21, 1885,



p. 317, there is a case recorded of the bursting of a blood vessel through too energetic singing, but this is altogether abnormal, and beyond the scope of our enquiry. The voice, properly used, will last as long as any other organ, and it benefits by exercise. Mr. D. W. Rootham of Bristol, who now at middle age has a strong constitution and a fine baritone voice, tells me that as a boy at Cambridge he sang for seven years at five services every Sunday. The thing seems incredible, and it is an extreme case, though it shows what work the voice, properly managed, will do.

Singing, it should be remembered, promotes health. It does so indirectly by causing cheerfulness, a genial flow of spirits, and the soothing of the nerves. It does so directly by increasing the action of the lungs. So far as these organs are concerned, singing is a more energetic form of speech. As we sing we breathe deeply, bring more air into contact with the lungs, and thus vitalise and purify the blood, giving stimulus to the faculties of digestion and nutrition. A physiologist, in fact, can trace the effects of singing from the lungs into the blood, from the blood into the processes of nutrition, back again into the blood, into the nerves, and finally into the brain, which of all organs is most dependent upon healthful and well-oxygenated blood. Sir George Martin (of St. Paul's Cathedral) has had many years' experience in training choir-boys, and he tells me that he has never known a boy to injure his voice, or lose it through singing. It is a question of method; if the voice be used properly it will stand any amount of work. He has seen boys disposed to consumption improve in health after joining the choir. The medical man who declared that if there were more singing there would be less coughing, expressed in a graphic way the healthful influence of vocal practice. Parents and guardians need never hesitate to allow their sons and charges to become choir-boys under proper choirmasters. They may be sure that nothing but good can come of the exercise.

Two cautions only are needed. The first is, not to sing during a cold. When a slight inflammation has attacked the larynx—that is, when a cold has been taken—the vocal cords are

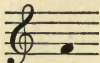
thickened, and the act of vocalisation causes them to rub together, which increases the inflammation. If the cold is a bad one—that is, if the inflammation is great—the singer will be compelled to rest, because the congestive swelling of the vocal cords will be so great that they will be unable to vibrate sufficiently to produce tone. But whether slight or great, the cold demands rest. Otherwise permanent injury may be done to the voice.

The second caution relates to the preservation, not of the boy's voice, but of the man's. There is no doubt that it is undesirable for a boy to continue to sing after his voice has shown signs of "breaking." What are the first signs of this change? Choirmasters notice that the middle register becomes weak, without any diminution in the power and quality of the upper notes, but that at the same time the thick register grows stronger, and the boy can strike tenor C with firmness. "The striking of tenor C," says Mr. G. Bernard Gilbert, "is usually sufficient to decide the point." The tradition of teachers is in favour of rest at this time, and a well-founded public impression counts for a good deal. The fact is that during the time of change not only do the vocal cords lengthen, but they are congested. An inflammatory action, like that which takes place during a cold, is set up. Hence rest is desirable. Nature herself also counsels rest because she reduces the musical value of the voice at this time to a low ebb. It becomes husky and of uncertain intonation. No doubt cases can be quoted of boys who have sung on uninterruptedly and developed into good tenors or basses, but there are cases equally strong in which the man's voice has completely failed after such a course. Sir Morell Mackenzie is the only medical writer who has advocated singing during change of voice, but not even his authority can upset the weight of evidence on the other side.

Nevertheless, on the principle of "hear both sides" I quote the following from a letter by Mr. R. H. Saxton, choir-master of St. James's church, at Buxton:—

"Upon the question of resting completely from singing

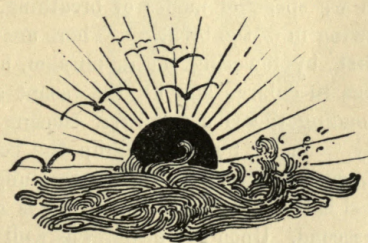
during the period of change of voice, I hold that one must be guided by the circumstances of each individual case. I carefully watch each boy when I am expecting the change to commence, and it usually shows itself by the upper thin register giving way. If I cannot immediately spare the boy from the treble part (and good leading boys are not plentiful), I caution him to leave high notes alone, never to force them, and as soon as possible I relegate him to the alto part, where he often remains useful to me for a year or eighteen months. All the time he is singing the alto part I keep watch over him, and forbid his singing as soon as there are indications that the effort is in the slightest degree painful. Generally I find this prohibition to be

only necessary for notes above  Should a vacancy occur

in the senior choir (if the boy shows signs of his voice developing to either tenor or bass) I get him passed from the junior to the senior choir, warning him, however, to be very careful of his high notes, and never to force them. My general experience leads me to the conclusion that it is a most arbitrary and unnecessary rule to lay down that every boy should rest at this time. In some cases it is necessary, no doubt, but my opinion is, after twenty years' practical experience, that in a large number of cases it is cruel, and about as much use with regard to the after-development of the voice as it would be to prohibit speaking. Speaking practically—not scientifically—I hold that the vocal organ is beneficially exercised when singing is allowed in moderation, and within the restricted limits which every choirmaster ought to know how to apply. I have experienced boys who have never rested developing good voices, as well as those who have rested. But I have no experience of boys who have never rested developing bad voices, though I have of those who did rest. I have three boys in one family in my mind now, one of whom had a good alto, the other two good soprano voices. The alto and one soprano never rested, and developed respectively a good tenor and bass. The other rested (through removal to another town), and developed a very indifferent bass."



In spite of this weighty and well-argued statement, my own opinion is that the preponderance of evidence is in favour of rest. It is certainly a new physiological doctrine for a short period of rest to injure or prevent the development of any organ. In short, I cannot see how there can be any disadvantage in a few months' rest, while from the other point of view there can be no musical advantage in the use of an unmusical instrument. As soon as the man's voice shows signs of settlement its practice should gently begin.



## CHAPTER II.

---

### MANAGEMENT OF THE BREATH.

BREATHING in singing is a matter of the utmost importance. The breath is the motive power, the primary force, to which the larynx and the resonance chamber are but secondary. In speech we can manage with short breathing and half-filled lungs, but in sustaining the sounds of song, we need to breathe deeply, and to breathe in a right way. Manifestly the act of breathing consists of two parts—(1) the drawing in, and (2) the letting out of the breath. When we speak of modes of breathing, however, we refer to the drawing in of the breath. There are three ways of doing this. First, by lowering the diaphragm, and thus compelling the lungs to enlarge and fill the vacant space created. Second, by extending the ribs sideways, causing the lungs to expand laterally. Third, by drawing up the collar-bone and shoulder blades, causing the upper part of the lungs to expand. The third method is bad; the ideal breathing is a combination of the first and second. Upon this athletes as well as singers are agreed. This is the breathing which we practise unconsciously in sleep, or in taking a long sniff at a flower. The musical results of bad breathing are flattening and a hurrying of the time; hence the importance of the matter. Practice may well begin with a few minutes devoted to breathing exercises. Let the boys inhale a long breath through the nose; hold it for a time, and then slowly exhale. Again let them slowly inhale, hold, and exhale quickly, allowing the sides of the chest to collapse. Again, let them, while holding the breath, press it

from the lower to the middle, and to the upper part of the chest, and *vice versa*. During this exercise the body should be in the position of "stand at ease." The spirometer, a useful but rather expensive little instrument, measures accurately lung capacity. These breathing exercises may be followed by practice in holding a single tone for a period just short of exhaustion.

Choirmasters should follow up these outlines by consulting a voice-training manual such as Behnke's "Mechanism of the Human Voice," where more minute information is given.





## CHAPTER III.

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### THE ART OF MANAGING CHOIR BOYS.

To some choirmasters the management of their boys is a perfectly easy matter; to others it is a constant source of trouble. Everything depends upon knack. Max O'Rell has some wise maxims on the subject which it may be well to quote. "Face the boys," he says, "or you will be nowhere. Always be lively. Never show your temper: to let the boys see that they can ruffle you is to give them a victory. Allow no chatting. Never over-praise clever boys; never snub dull ones. Never expect any thanks. If a boy laughs at a mistake made by another boy, ask him for the answer immediately, and he will be dumb. If you do not love boys, never become a choir [school] master."

Discipline is preserved by giving the boys seats in the same relative position at rehearsal and in church. There should be a double row of desks in the practice room, provided with a shelf for books, just as in the stalls. If the boys have to hold the books and music in their hands they stoop, and the singing suffers. Each boy should have a copy of the music, and it should bear his number, so that he is personally responsible for its good keeping. Punctuality at rehearsal is important. Let the choirmaster call for order at the exact time, and let the roll be gone over at once. To be unpunctual, or not to register early attendance, is to encourage laxity.

There is no doubt that the long services in many churches are trying to the choir boys. In some churches the morning service lasts two hours and a quarter. It is very hard even for an adult to keep his thoughts from wandering, and his eyes from

glancing over the congregation during all this time. How much more hard is it, then, for a boy who is by nature a fidget, and if healthy, brimming over with activity? Nevertheless boys can be trained, if not to control their thoughts, at least to an outward reverence and quietude in harmony with the service. Reproof, if it is needed, is best administered in private. Boys should be paid, if only a small sum; this gives the choirmaster a hold upon them, and enables him to impose fines, if necessary. Payment can be increased for those who take Tonic Sol-fa or other sight-singing certificates, which of course increase their value as choristers. Let it be noted that the voices will carry further if the boys hold up their heads. This caution is especially needed when they are singing in the kneeling posture.

All that can be done to interest the boys in their work by encouraging the social feeling, will be to the advantage of the choir. Their hearts are easily won. An excursion, an evening party once a year are great attractions. Mr. H. B. Roney, of Chicago, advocates a choir guild, and in the choir-room he would have a library, games, puzzles, footballs, bats and balls, Indian clubs, and dumb-bells. He would open and warm the choir-room an hour before each service and rehearsal. To some extent he would let the youngsters govern themselves, and says that the gravity with which they will appoint a judge, a jury, sheriff, prisoner, and witnesses to try a case of infraction of the choir rules, would bring a smile to the face of a graven image. Prizes at Christmas are part of his scheme; these should be awarded for such points as punctuality, progress in music, reverential demeanour, and general excellence.

According to Mr. Sergison, the late organist of St. Peter's, Eaton Square, the choirmaster will have power if he make himself beloved. He should enter into the boys' way of looking at things, and remember that they have deep feelings. The boys should be arranged in classes, each higher class having higher pay, with sundry little privileges. Mr. Sergison says that by putting the boys upon their honour, and treating them well, he has always maintained strict discipline, and has never

yet had to resort to corporal punishment. The Rev. E. Husband, of Folkestone, who is an enthusiastic choir-trainer, is strongly of opinion that for vocal purposes working-class boys are better than the sons of gentlemen. He finds that boys of a lower class have richer and fuller voices than those above them in the social scale. I was myself present, not long since, at a concert at Eton College, and although I was greatly struck with the purity of the tone, its volume was thin and somewhat shallow. One reason why working-class boys excel, probably, is that plain food and outdoor life keep the body in the best condition, so that the children of the poor, so long as they are well-nourished, are healthier than the children of the rich. But the working-class boys have also this advantage, that they begin life at four years of age in an Infant School, where they sing every day, and receive systematic Tonic Sol-fa teaching which is continued when they pass into the boys' department. Boys who are trained under governesses and at private preparatory schools often learn no singing at all. It is to be hoped that the diffusion of musical knowledge will make these class-comparisons, from a musical point of view, unnecessary. The choir-boys of Christ Church, Oxford, are all the sons of professional men, but then the choice is a wide one, as they come from all parts of the country.

The precentor of a cathedral writes to me on an important branch of our subject. I sincerely hope that his picture is not one that is generally true:—

“My own experience would suggest that in connection with the training of cathedral choristers the attention of cathedral organists might be very advantageously drawn to the very great importance of efficiency in the art of teaching—of imparting knowledge. The instruction given may be as good as could well be desired, but the manner of imparting it just as bad—such as would be condemned in any well-conducted Public Elementary School. Uncontrolled temper, the cane, boxing of the ears, are matters which go far to prove a teacher very seriously incompetent as a teacher. A cathedral organist is specially exposed to



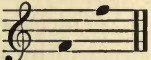
the temptation to hastiness and harshness, owing to the power he possesses. A parent values the position of a chorister for his son, and the organist is tempted soon to take advantage of the parent's unwillingness to withdraw his son. In a parish choir, either voluntary or paid at a very low rate, the exhibition of bad temper or discourtesy in manner is quickly followed, in all probability, by the loss of the offended chorister. Offensive manners on the part of the trainer quickly endanger the existence of the choir. Not so in cathedrals, and the cathedral organist knows this. 'I cannot think why that boy does not sing in tune; I have boxed his ears;' said a cathedral organist once to me quite seriously. This proves, I think, how blind even a highly-trained musician may be to the need for any art in the mode of imparting instruction. I fear there is a vulgar notion (only half defined, most probably) that irascibility in the musical trainer is a mark of genius. I write from experience, having been upwards of a quarter of a century in cathedrals, and a considerable portion of that time precentor."

In conclusion, the custom of throwing a halo of sentiment round choir-boys, and petting them, is much to be deprecated. It has become the custom to write tales and songs about them in which they are made out to be little angels in disguise. All this is very foolish and harmful. Choir-boys, as a rule, are no better and no worse than other boys. They respond well to wise treatment, but need to be governed by common sense, and to be taught their places. I am myself somewhat to blame for illustrating this book with two pictures of choir boys. It is really inconsistent.

## CHAPTER IV.

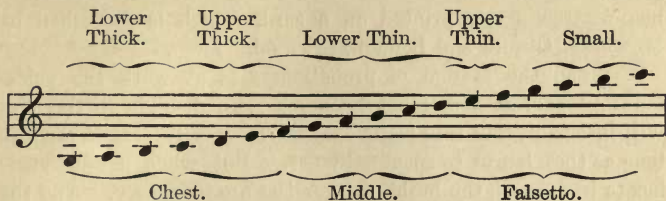
### VOICE TRAINING.

BEFORE commencing to train a voice the choirmaster must make sure that it is a voice worth training. He must take the boy alone, test his voice by singing scales, and try especially his

notes in the treble compass, say,  He must test

his ear by playing phrases, and asking the boy to sing them. He must enquire into his theoretical knowledge, if any, and ask if he has had a Tonic Sol-fa or any other systematic training. The ear of the choirmaster must decide upon the voice. It is said by some that boys' voices partake of one or other of two

		C <sup>2</sup>	quality. They differ, no doubt, in <i>timbre</i> , but
		B <sup>1</sup>	these two divisions are not clearly marked.
Small.	{	A <sup>1</sup>	The diagram at the side gives the compass
		G <sup>1</sup>	of the registers in boy trebles and altos.
Upper Thin.		F <sup>1</sup>	The names are those invented by the late
		E <sup>1</sup>	John Curwen, and have the advantage of
	{	D <sup>1</sup>	describing the physiological action that
		C <sup>1</sup>	goes on. Thus in the Thick Register, the
Lower Thin.		B	vocal cords vibrate in their whole thick-
		A	ness; in the Thin Register their thin
	{	G	edges alone vibrate; and in the Small
Upper Thick.		F	Register a small aperture only is made,
		E	through which the sound comes. The
		D	registers are practically the same as those
	{	C	of women's voices. They may be shown
Lower Thick.		B <sub>1</sub>	on the staff, thus:—
		A <sub>1</sub>	
		G <sub>1</sub>	



I give below the staff another set of names which are sometimes used, but different voice-trainers attach to these different meanings.

It is undesirable to tell the boys anything about the registers. The spirit of voice-training at the present time is too analytical. The theory of the registers is for the teacher, not for the pupil. Some voice-trainers seem to think that it is their business to discover the registers, but as far as tone goes it is their business to conceal them. Trainers work better through possessing physiological knowledge, but the end is a smooth and homogeneous voice, blended and well-built.

Roughly speaking, the boys to be rejected are those who through carelessness, excitement, or confirmed habit, force up the thick register while singing. And those to be accepted are the boys who have sufficient reserve and care to turn into the fluty tone at the proper place, whether the music be loud or soft, and whatever be the shape of the melodic passage. The right use of the voice is most likely to come from boys who, whatever their social status, are well brought up, and have been taught to avoid screaming, coarse laughing and bawling, and if possible to speak in a clear way.

Voice studies are of two kinds. First come those which promote the building and setting of the voice. These are generally sung slowly. When the voice is becoming settled exercises for agility may be introduced. Of agility exercises most voice-training books contain plenty. There is a good selection in Mr. Sinclair Dunn's "The Solo Singer's Vade Mecum" (J. Curwen & Sons, price 1s.) and Sir John Stainer



has written a set, printed on a card, which is published by Mowbray, Oxford and London, price 6d.

When the system of probationers is at work the voice-building exercises will not be much needed. The little boys will insensibly fall into right habits. They will learn to produce tone as they learnt to speak—by ear. But when a new choir has to be formed, the building exercises are necessary. And the first object of these is to make the boy feel the thin register and strengthen it by use. For this purpose such phrases as these, which leap into the thin register, and quit it by step are the best :—

KEY **E<sup>b</sup>**. d' t l s d' t l s m' r' d' t d'

KEY **G**. s f m r f m r d l s f s m

These exercises should be sung to several vowels, but especially to the sound “koo,” which will at first immensely amuse the boys, but will afterwards be found to throw the tone forward towards the teeth in a way that no other sound does.

Pure vowel tone goes with pure and resonant voice. The broad and pure vowels of the Yorkshire dialect have, more than anything else, produced the Yorkshire voices. Hence the choir-master must make a determined effort to cure provincialisms in so far as they prevent the issue of pure vowel sounds from the mouth. The vowels should be sung in their vocal order as recommended by Mr. Behnke, oo (as in *you*), o (as in *owe*), ah (as in *Shah*), a (as in *pay*), and ee (as in *see*). These may be taken to slow scales, thus :—

oo - o - ah - a - ee oo - o - ah - a - ee, &c.

Let the choirmaster watch carefully for impure sounds, and call upon each boy to sing two measures by himself from time to time.

In singing the boy should stand upright and free. He must not lean or bend his body. The mouth must be fairly opened, but not too wide. As the voice ascends the mouth opens wider. The lips must lie lightly on the teeth, and the tongue should lie at rest, just touching the front teeth. If, for the sake of change during a long rehearsal, the boys sit, let it be remembered that there are many ways of sitting, and that the upright posture hinders the breath less than lolling and a crooked posture. Rigidity is the enemy of all good singing. Let the whole body and vocal apparatus be relaxed, and pure tone will result. "If I hear a boy forcing up his voice," said Herr Eglinger, of Basel, to me, "I ask the rest of the class to point him out, and they do it at once." This at once cures the transgressor and sharpens the consciences of the other boys. As to the vowel on which singers should be trained, there are differences of opinion. Maurice Strakosch, the trainer of Patti, Nilsson, &c., used "ha," which causes a slight breath to precede the articulation. This, he said, gives the voice a natural start. It is something like the "koo" of Mrs. Seiler. Learners he required to lower their heads while singing, and to show the upper teeth, so as to keep the lips out of the way of the tone. Mr. Barnicott, a successful choirmaster at Taunton, uses "ka." But as in the actual singing of the English language all the vowels are encountered in turn, it would seem reasonable that they should all be included in the practice.

Mr. Walter Brooks, quoted elsewhere, lays stress upon long-sustained notes in the scale of E flat, and up to G. These expand the lower part of the lungs, and produce steady, firm tone. They should be sung both loud and soft, the boys one by one and together. An admirable plan is to keep boys on the alert listening for faults, asking those not singing, "Whose fault is that?" Jealousy and conceit, says Mr. Brooks, are avoided by giving a solo to three or four boys to sing in unison.

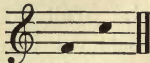
Three or four will blend better than two, and after proper rehearsal the tone is so like one voice that people say, "What a beautiful voice that boy has!"

As to balance of parts, the following table is given by Mr. H. B. Roney of Chicago:—

Sopranos	12	17	25	37	50
Altos	4	5	7	11	14
Tenors	4	5	8	11	14
Basses	5	8	10	16	22
	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>
	25	35	50	75	100

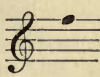
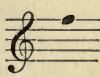
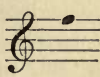
Mr. Stocks Hammond says that during voice exercise the boys should stand perfectly erect, with mouth well open, the shoulders being thrown back. After exercise in slowly inhaling and exhaling the breath, comes the uniting of the registers. This is accomplished by singing up and down the scales of C, D, and E to the syllable "ah." Each tone is taken with decision, and is followed by a slight pause. The same scales are afterwards sung to "oh" and "oo." This exercise should not last longer than ten or fifteen minutes. Staccato scales to "ah!" "oh!" and chromatic passages are introduced later.

Mr. G. Bernard Gilbert, F.C.O., of West Ham Parish Church, is an exceptionally skilled trainer of boys' voices. He meets his boys half-an-hour before each of the Sunday Services and "tunes them up," an admirable plan, which cannot be too widely imitated. The first thing he does in training boys is to teach them to attack and leave sounds with precision, neatness, and proper register or quality of voice. He

gives chief attention to the sounds between  and

first practises them. If beauty of tone is to be obtained, it is of the utmost importance that these sounds should be given in the thin register. Mr. Gilbert has cultivated this register in his own voice, and is able to give the boys a pattern in the right octave, which he thinks of great use. The change from upper thick to lower thin takes place between E and F. The boys



should intone in the thin register. Flattening while intoning is almost entirely due to boys using the thick register. Mr. Gilbert uses the vowels as arranged by Mr. Behnke, oo-o-ah-ai-ee, practised first with a slight breath between each, afterwards all in one breath, *piano* and *staccato*. Consonants preceding these vowels are of little value, as they only disguise a wrong action of the glottis, without removing the fault. He uses also sustained sounds, and short major or minor arpeggi, and last of all scale passages. If due attention be given to the intonation of the arpeggio, the scale should not be, as it too often is, all out of tune. The arpeggio is its skeleton or framework. Mr. Gilbert alternates this work with the singing of intervals and the practice of time rhythms. He attaches great value to the vowel "e" in practising sustained notes, scales or arpeggi, though other vowels must receive due attention. "E" has the advantage of bringing the vocal cords very close to together, thereby effecting a greater economy of the breath than is possible with the other vowels. He has constantly succeeded in making boys produce a pure and beautiful tone to this vowel, especially in that part of the voice called the upper thin, when he could not do so with the others. Of course "e" can be sung badly, and boys will sometimes make a nasal squeak of it, but the correct placing of the tone is quickly learnt if the teeth are kept nicely apart. Mr. Gilbert teaches the boys when very young the mechanism which governs their voices above  This is the "small" register. He is careful also about  pronunciation, recommends that boys should be paid,  and that bad behaviour, laziness, or irregularity, if they occur, should be punished by fines. One of the most marked excellences of Mr. Gilbert's choir is its chanting, and the elocutional phrasing of the words of the hymns. The rigidity of the time is often broken with impressive effect in order, by an elocutional pause, to throw into relief a prominent word or idea.

Mr. T. H. Collinson, Mus.B., organist of St. Mary's Cathedral, Edinburgh, has given me some interesting particulars


of the training which his excellent boys undergo. The process of selection is as follows:—(1) Advertisement. (2) Trial of voice, and entry of particulars of school, school standard, father's occupation, &c. (3) Choice of most promising voices. (4) Inspection of homes, as to overcrowding, &c. (5) Appointment of probationers. (6) Full appointment, with religious service of admission by the Dean. The parents engage in writing to retain the child in the choir school until his voice changes, or to the average age of fourteen. The boys are taken at all ages from 9 to 12½.

“Cultivation of tone, blending of registers, and accuracy of pitch are specially studied, the principal means being as follows:—(1) Mouth-opening (silently). (2) Breathing exercise. (3) Sustained notes *piano*, each to full length of breath. (4) *Piano* scales. (5) Simple flexibility exercises, *e.g.*, Sir J. Stainer's card of exercises, published by Mowbray. (6) *Crescendo* and *Diminuendo*. (7) Behnke's resonance vowels, oo-o-ah. (8) Behnke's glottis-stroke exercises, oo-o-ah-ai-ce. (9) No accompaniment, except a single note on the pianoforte every three or four bars to test pitch. Where badly flat, a scolding, and going back to try over again. (10) At early morning practice no *forte* singing is allowed, as a rule.

“By the above means, especially sustained notes and *piano* scales, flatness is easily avoided, and the registers blend perfectly. A curious local peculiarity has to be specially treated in the junior boys. The Scottish ‘u’ as in ‘gude’ (good), ‘puir’ (poor), ‘nü’ (new), is identical with the French ‘u’ in ‘tu’ or ‘Hugo,’ and the little fellows sing an amusing exercise like the following:—

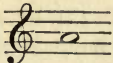
You should do two,

on every note of the scale, with special care to protrude the lips to a round whistling shape for the ‘oo.’ Very oddly they sing a good ‘oo’ in the falsetto register, and a certain solo boy used to sing Handel's ‘How beautiful are the feet’ in its first two phrases in alternate Scotch and English, the vinegary ‘ü’ in the first (low) phrase, and a fine round ‘oo’ in the higher phrase, where ‘beautiful’ begins on F. flat.

“Raw candidates and ill-taught children generally come minus any register at all above  and grin with surprise on being taught to produce sweet upper notes by open-mouth *piano* ‘ah.’

“Colds and petty hoarseness, interfering with the upper notes, are terribly common in this climate in the class of boys obtained for the choir. A successful soloist at Friday rehearsal may be found incompetent by Sunday, so that all solo work is carefully understudied. A few minutes each day suffice for the purely technical voice exercises. The services are many in number; three on Sunday, two on week-days, and occasional extra services at special seasons. The number of boys is kept up to say 30, and they are worked in divisions to minimise their duties. The boys are educated free, and seniors receive payment. ‘I think that boys’ voices are much like unto boys’ legs—they need daily exercise if they are to be worth anything.’”

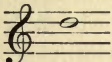
Mr. R. H. Saxton, of Buxton, writes:—“My choir boys are almost exclusively drawn from the working class, and the majority of them use the thick register for the speaking voice. I take them at nine years of age, sometimes younger if they can read fairly well, and my first effort is to suppress the thick register altogether in singing. If they were encouraged to use it they would most certainly abuse it by carrying it far beyond its proper range. Soft singing is the only effective plan I know of for removing the tendency to use the thick register. This I insist on in modulator voluntaries and time exercises. The time

exercises are always laa’d on or above  In modulator

work I at first avoid beginning in the lower keys where the thick register would naturally be used. By thus constantly cultivating the thin register, never allowing faulty intonation to pass unnoticed, and always checking the natural tendency of boys to



sing coarsely; together with a free use of ear exercises, in which they are taught to recognise tones by their mental effect, I succeed at last in getting fairly good tone. It is, however, a work of time and difficulty, on account of the daily surroundings of the boys, and the habitually coarse way in which they are allowed to sing in school. To avoid flattening, I believe the course I have indicated to be the best remedy, as eye, ear, and voice are cultivated simultaneously.

“In training the thin register special care must be taken that the Upper Thin is brought out at  and it is often

better that the C also should be taken in the Upper Thin. A strained Lower Thin on C sharp or D will be sure to induce flattening, while if the Upper Thin is properly used there is no difficulty whatever in using the high D and E within reasonable limits as the reciting note in chanting. When the music moves about stepwise in close proximity above and below the breaks, we have another cause of flattening. As most of our country choirs consist at the best of but partly-trained voices, composers and choirmasters should bear this in mind. It must not be supposed that boys are the sole cause of flattening. Far from it, they are too often the victims of an untuneful tenor or bass.

“From the first moment a boy comes under my care he is encouraged to take the Tonic Sol-fa certificates, and few leave the choir without having passed the Intermediate. I am of course now speaking of those boys who remain with us till they are no longer of use as boys.”

I append an extract from a letter by Mr. J. C. E. Taylor, master of the Boys' National School at Penzance, and choir-master of St. Mary's Church, which is interesting as showing the extent to which singing by ear can be carried:—

“The children here, as in most Cornish towns, are fond of music, and have a quick ear. I pick my boys from a school of

nearly 400. I choose them by the way they *read* in school. They are generally of Standard V., and between ten and eleven years of age. If younger the Psalms puzzle them. I try a new boy's voice at the choir practice. If he has a sweet tone, and can reach F sharp, however faintly, I accept him, and keep him on probation at the practices. About half-a-dozen are so kept, and the best lad fills any vacancy occurring in the choir. I have no trouble as regards discipline, as a fine, or the knowledge that their places can be instantly filled by the probationers, keeps the choristers well in their places. At the choir practices I begin with running up and down the scales with their voices together, beginning soft, and allowing the voices to increase as the scales ascend, and diminish on descending, but holding on to the top-most notes whilst I play a chord or two on it. Then with a nod of my head they descend. At times one note is given them on which to *cres.* and *dim.*, for breathing exercise. Not one lad knows his notes except as to their rise and fall and values. They depend on their ear entirely, even in the most difficult fugues."

At this church anthems and settings of the Canticles are sung every Sunday evening. The men are voluntary; the head boys get from 30s. to 40s. a year, the solo boys receiving 3d. or 6d. as an encouragement after rendering a solo or verse part.

In spite of all that can be written on the subject of voice-training, the art is one most difficult to communicate. Some teachers succeed; others fail. A remarkable instance of this came under my notice lately. The headmaster of a school asked me to pay his boys a visit in order, if possible, to discover the reason of the great falling-off in their singing. His previous singing-teacher had brought the boys to a high pitch of excellence. When he left, the singing was placed under the charge of an undermaster, who had for a year or more heard all the singing lessons given by his predecessor, who used the same voice exercises with the same boys in the same room. Surely, one would have thought the results must be the same. But the

singing had deteriorated; flattening, and a lifeless manner had overcome the boys. The causes, so far as I could discover, were first that the new teacher wanted the magnetic, enthusiastic way of the old, and second, that he had not so quick an ear for change of register, and allowed the lower mechanism of the voice to be forced up higher than its proper limits.

This chapter focusses a large amount of valuable experience, but amid the many hints which are given, two ways of securing right tone stand out with marked prominence. They are, soft singing, and the downward practice of scales.





## CHAPTER V.

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### INFORMATION ON VOICE-TRAINING, COLLECTED BY THE SALISBURY DIOCESAN CHORAL ASSOCIATION.

I AM indebted to the Rev. W. Miles Barnes, rector of Monkton, Dorchester, for the following information, recently obtained by him on the subject of voice-training. It appears that for the information of choir instructors (some 200 in number) in union with the Salisbury Diocesan Choral Association, the advice of precentors and organists of cathedrals was lately sought as to the best way of correcting a very common fault in the singing of country choirs.

The following questions were proposed :

- “(I.) It is a common practice in country choirs for boys and tenors to force the lower register to sing notes which should be taken in the higher or head register. The notes thus forced are harsh and unmusical in tone, and generally flat in pitch. How would you correct this fault in boys ?”
- “(II.) What method is employed in ——— Cathedral for developing and strengthening the higher (head) register in boys’ voices ?”

The following are extracts from the replies :—

Rev. F. J. HELMORE, Precentor of Canterbury.

I should recommend the practice of the first five notes of the scales of A, B2, B, and C, *piano*, taken rather slowly, and then of intervals from G to D, G to E2, G to E, A to E, &c. &c.

After that I would try them with the complete scales of E, F, F $\sharp$ , and G, fast and *forte*, thus:—



If no improvement is perceptible, begin again. Practice is the main thing, after a boy has got to understand his faults.

REV. W. MANN, M.A., Precentor of Bristol.

(1.) I think it almost impossible to remedy the evil you complain of after the boys have been accustomed to sing upper notes from the chest for some time—say one or two years. Our practice here is to secure boys between the ages of 9 and 11, before they have been singing elsewhere, or certainly before they have acquired any faulty tricks of forcing the voice.

(2.) In training boys' voices never allow them to shout. If they commence singing when young they may be taught by scale practice (always singing quietly) to bridge over the break which exists between the chest and head voice. This is an art, and requires experience.

(3.) Speaking generally, I should say that judicious scale practice is the remedy likely to be of most service in the case specified, teaching boys, by singing quietly, to glide the chest voice into the upper register. I recommend the syllable "la" as generally best for the purpose all through the scale. Boys should keep their tongues down, open mouths well, sing not through teeth, &c. &c. I find that boys acquire the cathedral style of singing (with the well-known flute or bell-like tone) chiefly by example. In singing with boys who have already acquired it the younger ones catch the style, just as birds are taught to sing by trained songsters. The untrained rustic can never naturally produce this tone, but much may be done by (1) careful scale practice; (2) strict enforcement of a quiet easy style, and rigid prohibition of shouting, or forcing the voice; (3) the occasional example of trained singers.

Rev. C. HYLTON STEWART, Precentor of Chester.

The great thing is not to train boys *up* through break in the voice, but *down* through it, and so to coach them that the break becomes imperceptible. The top notes ought to be practised very softly until a good round note is procured. This, however, can seldom be done out of a cathedral, as it requires constant attention.

Rev. W. E. DICKSON, Precentor of Ely.

In this Cathedral, and I suppose in every other, the boys have at least one hour of daily practice under the most favourable circumstances of quiet music-room and good pianoforte, and an able teacher. The two orderly services follow with the regularity of a clock, and in these the voices of the boys are balanced and supported by those of adult singers—presumably, good vocalists.

I think you will agree that no practical rules, available by instructors of village choirs, can be founded upon arrangements so far beyond their reach. To describe any “Method” of developing voices under such circumstances would be quite delusive.

A life-long experience in the training of parish choirs would lead me to say that the best approach to true voice-production is made when a lady takes charge of the choir, and has the boys to practise at her own house.

To say that all instructors should use unwearied diligence and unflinching patience and kindness in the attempt to get soft singing, is only to repeat a very trite remark.

In schools, the mistake is often made of singing almost all the exercises in the key of C, and commencing all scales with the syllable “Do.” In trying candidates for admission to the choir, we constantly find that they have been accustomed to a scale of 13 notes only (one octave) up and down. The scales should begin on all or any of the notes—D $\sharp$ , B $\sharp$ , G $\flat$ , &c., and the peculiarities of the intervals should be familiarly explained.

A pamphlet might be written. But there is no “Royal road.”



J. M. W. YOUNG, Esq., late Organist of Lincoln.

The precentor has forwarded your note to me. In answer to your question asking how to prevent the trebles in country choirs from forcing the upper notes, I would suggest that when practising the choir, care should be taken that the trebles are never allowed to sing even the *middle* notes *loud*, only *mf*, and they should be frequently practised to sing *piano*. If this be attended to, it will, in a great measure, prevent the forcing of the voice on the higher notes, which should never be practised otherwise than softly.

Country choirs nearly always sing twice as loud as they ought to do, consequently the tone becomes harsh and grating, and they invariably sing the upper notes out of tune.

I never allow the Cathedral choristers to practise in a loud tone of voice, yet their voices are rich and mellow, and there is never any want of power when it is required. Any tendency to force the voice is checked at once. It will be found very useful to practise the trebles with the diatonic scale at a moderately quick pace, taking care to sing it *smoothly* and *piano throughout*, first to "OO," next to "Oh," and finally to "Ah."



## CHAPTER VI.

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### PRONUNCIATION IN SINGING.

It is impossible to emphasise too strongly the importance of clear pronunciation in singing. The English, as a rule, pronounce indistinctly. "We carry on our talk," says Mr. H. Deacon, "in mere *smudges* of sound," a graphic and true way of putting things. The Scotch, Welsh, and Americans pronounce better than we do. Indistinctness and bad dialect arise, roughly speaking, from two sources—impure vowels and omitted consonants. The impure vowels are generally due to local habits of speech, such as the London dialect, which makes a colourless mixture of all the vowels. In some parts of Scotland also the vowels are very impure. The voice-training exercises given elsewhere are several of them directed towards the production of good vowel tone, but the danger is lest the power gained in these should not be applied to the actual words encountered in psalm, canticle, anthem, or hymn. A sentence containing all the vowels may be chanted repeatedly on a monotone, but after all the best exercise consists in constant watchfulness against mispronunciation in the ordinary weekly practice.

Man, according to Mr. R. G. White, may be defined as a consonant-using animal. He alone of all animals uses consonants. The cries of animals and of infants are inarticulate. So is the speech of a drunken man, who descends, vocally as well as in other ways, to the level of the beasts. This idea has been expressed in another way, by saying that vowels express the emotional side of speech, and consonants its intellectual side. All these distinctions point to the great importance of a clear

enunciation of initial and final consonants, and a clear separation of words. A well-known bishop said to a candidate for ordination, "Before uttering a second word be sure that you have yourself heard the first."

It is of no use to give a list of common errors, because each part of the country has its own bad points of dialect. The choirmaster should take his standard of English from the best preacher and reader he has the chance to hear, and endeavour to conform his boys to it.

But localisms are not the only faults. Boys are very apt to clip their words in chanting, to omit the smaller parts of speech altogether, and to invent new and meaningless sounds of their own. The most familiar parts of the service need frequent and watchful rehearsal to prevent this tendency. Chanting, as a rule, is much too fast, and the eagerness of the boys must be restrained in this direction.

In those rare cases where pronunciation and elocutional phrasing reach a high pitch of excellence, the music of the service makes a double appeal to the heart. It bears not only the charm of sweet sounds, but the eloquence of noble words.





## CHAPTER VII.

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### SINGING BY EAR AND BY NOTE.

MANY choirmasters maintain that, considering the short musical life of the choir-boy, it is not worth while to teach him to sing by note. The quickness of boys' ears for music, they say, is astonishing, while their memories are equally good. Between the two faculties—ear and memory—we are told that all things necessary are supplied. The boys, it is said, don't like theory, and it saves time and patience not to have to teach it to them.

I am altogether at issue with this view. I believe theory can be made interesting to boys, especially if the Tonic Sol-fa system is used, and that if they are taught sight-singing the choirmaster saves himself a vast amount of trouble. The after musical doings of the boys should also be considered, and whether they become tenors and basses, or take to an instrument, the power to read music will be a happiness through their whole lives.

The leading anthems, services, and psalters are now published in the Tonic Sol-fa notation, so that boys who have learnt to sing from the letters at school may quickly be put to sing their parts in the church choir. The late Alfred Stone, of Bristol, who used the Tonic Sol-fa notation for his choir boys, found it a great time-saver. So quickly was the service music got through at the weekly practice that there was nearly an hour to spare for singing glees and getting up cantatas. Mr. Stone arranged his boys in two grades. The upper grade all held a Tonic Sol-fa certificate, and they received higher pay than the lower grade. The result of this arrangement was that the lower boys got the upper ones to teach them Tonic Sol-fa in their playtime, and thus saved the choirmaster a great deal of trouble.

A serious disadvantage of the ordinary way of learning to sing from the staff notation is that practice usually begins in, and is for several months confined to key C. For boys' voices this is the most trying of all the keys—the one most likely to lead to bad habits in the use of the registers. The keys for boys to begin in are G and F, where you can get a cadence upon the tonic in the thin register. A German choirmaster, whose choir is greatly celebrated, has sent me a little book of exercises which he uses, and I find that, as in most English publications of a similar kind, there are pages of exercises in key C, before any other key is attempted. In Tonic Sol-fa all keys are equally available from the first.

I have had a wide experience of boys taught on all systems, both in this country and abroad. I have been present, by the courtesy of choirmasters, at rehearsals in all parts of the country. And I have noticed that boys taught by ear, or taught the staff notation by the fixed *do*, make mistakes which boys trained by Tonic Sol-fa and singing from it, or applying their knowledge of it to the staff notation, could not make. The class of mistake I refer to is that which confuses the place of the semitones in the scale. A sight-singing manual which I picked up the other day says that the whole matter of singing at sight lies in knowing where the semitones come. And from one point of view this is true, but to the Tonic Sol-faist the semitones always come in the same places, *i.e.*, between *me* and *fah*, and between *te* and *doh*. He has only one scale to learn, and as to modulation, that is accomplished for him by his notation, while the time marks, separating and defining the beats or pulses of the music, make rhythm vividly clear.

If choirmasters wish to save themselves trouble, and get confident attack and good intonation from their boys, they should teach them the Tonic Sol-fa notation, and let them sing from it always. The staff notation they can easily learn later on.

## CHAPTER VIII

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### FLATTENING, AND SINGING OUT OF TUNE.

THE trainer of adult voices has constantly before him the problem of making his pupils sing in tune. With boys this matter is less of a trouble, for this reason. Many adults have fine voices which, if their intonation can be improved, will do great things. Others have incurably bad voices, but possessing the ambition and the means for studying singing, they come under the hands of the professor. In the case of boys, however, there is a preliminary process of selection by which the teacher rejects at the outset any defective ears and voices. The trainer of boys chooses his pupils; adult students of singing, as a rule, choose their teacher.

Even, however, when a good set of boys has been chosen and trained, every choirmaster is troubled from time to time by the evils which I have named at the head of this paper.

What are their causes? Probably no cause is so fruitful as a misuse of the registers of the voice, a straining upwards of the lower register beyond its proper limits. This may be placed in the front as a perpetual cause of bad intonation and loss of pitch. This straining is usually accompanied with loud singing, but boys who have formed this bad habit will not at once sustain the pitch if told to sing softly. Their voices, under these circumstances, will at first prove weak and husky, and will flatten as much with soft singing as they did with loud. A slow process of voice training can alone set them right. But as boys' voices last so short a time this treatment is not worth the trouble. Boys who have fallen into thoroughly bad habits should therefore be dismissed, and a fresh selection made.



Some choirmasters imagine that practice with the organ or the pianoforte will cure flattening and uncertainty. This, however, is not the case. Probably the effort to keep up the pitch which singers make when unaccompanied keeps their minds and throats tense and active, while the consciousness that the instrument is supporting them makes them careless. An instrument reveals loss of pitch, but does not cure it. No good choirmaster rehearses with the organ. A pianoforte, lightly touched, is commonly used, but the teacher should frequently leave his seat, and accustom the choir to go on alone.

It is a mistake to suppose that boys flatten because the music is too high. This is very rarely the case. They are more likely to flatten because it is too low. Boys attack high notes with greater ease than women.

Nervousness will cause a singer who has sung in perfect tune at home to sing sharp or flat at a concert. But nervousness does not greatly trouble boys.

Carelessness will sometimes cause these troubles. The way to cure this is to increase the interest of the rehearsal, to make the boys feel bright, happy, and comfortable.

To mark the breathing places is a good way of preventing flattening, which is often caused by exhausted lungs.

Singing is a mental as well as a physical act, and unless the boy has a clear conception in his mind of the sound of the note he wants, the intonation will be uncertain. Here comes in the Tonic Sol-fa system with its "Mental Effects," which give a recognisable character to each note of the scale, and guide the voice and ear.

Bad voice production, throaty and rigid, must always go with flattening and wavering pitch. The act of singing should be without effort; the muscles of head, neck, and throat should be relaxed. A boy inclined to these faults should be told to smile while singing. The tone will then become natural.

But in spite of all these hints, flattening occurs from time to time in the best trained choirs, and seems to defy the skill of

the choirmaster. All agree that a half empty church, a cold church, an ill-ventilated church promotes flattening, and it may be added that certain chants and tunes so hover about the region of the break that they invite false intonation.

Mr. H. A. Donald, headmaster of the Upton Cross Board School, tells me that he has not much flattening, but that when it comes it seems to be beyond control. The discipline of his school is excellent, but on a given day there will come, as it were, a mood over the boys which makes it impossible for them, try as they will, to avoid sinking. Sometimes, but not always, this will happen in warm weather. He has more than once abandoned the singing lesson, and taken up some other study because of it. One day recently the boys were most attentive, and their vexation and disappointment with the flattening was evident. Another day it does not trouble them in the least. This is a school where voice-training is exceptionally well looked after.

Several correspondents have favoured me with experience on this point, and I now proceed to quote their letters. Mr. W. W. Pearson, of Elmham, writes:—

“Ordinary flat singing is the result of want of practice and experience. Chronic flat singing is incurable, as it is due to a defective ear. A new lot of choir boys will be liable to sing flat, and to lower their pitch at any time for the first year or so; but after they have been in training for a considerable time, I never find that there is any inclination to sing flat. The notes most liable to be sung flat are the third and sixth of the scale, or any high note that requires courage and increased effort. One of these, having been sung flat, is taken by the singers as a new departure, and being used as a standard, the pitch is lowered, and all succeeding notes are flat.

“When I first formed my present choir I was very much plagued with flat singing, but I am seldom troubled in that way now, and I think the reason is that a large proportion of the members have been under training for a long time.

“I used to find flattening prevail more in muggy, damp, or

cold weather, and in heated rooms. I never allowed the choir to go on in this way, but stopped them at once, making them begin again after singing the scale of the key a few times. This, of course, refers to practice. In church I used to play the organ louder when I heard the pitch going down; or I would put on a powerful solo stop for the melody, and slightly prolong the final note of a cadence, in order that when the choir ceased singing they might hear the difference. When flattening occurred in the concert room I used to stop the accompaniment, which is, I think, about all that can be done under those circumstances. When the choir have been hopelessly bad in a hot practice room I have cured them by bringing them out into a cold room adjoining."

Mr. C. Hibberd, formerly of Bemerton, Salisbury, writes:—

"To prevent flattening I give great attention to the posture, seeing that the boys do not stand carelessly. A careless posture, I think, betokens a careless mind. I am careful not to overtire the children. They sit immediately one piece is finished, and stand immediately I sound the first chord of the next piece. I always start the practice with a few simple voice exercises. When training the choir of a place far away in the country, I spent more time than usual in giving ear exercises (dictation), as well as voice-training exercises. I pay great attention to 'mental effect,' and endeavour to let each boy or girl have a Tonic Sol-fa copy of the music. The syllables recall the mental effect to the mind. There should be no uncertainty as to either time or tune, and both words and notes should be attacked or struck with confidence. I always practise scales downwards, and have as little to do with the harmonium as possible at practice. Boy altos I rarely come across. I tried them once, but found they aided in flattening. We have two men altos here, who sing in a falsetto voice. The boys here have a name for singing well in tune, and they are very willing to do anything to keep up their character."

Mr. Walter Brooks, in a paper in the *Monthly Musical Record*, expresses the opinion that the 3rd and 7th of the major



scale are often sung flat. To cure this, each boy must tune up separately, then all should be tried together. Minor passages are often sung flat. Loss of pitch during service may, he says, be remedied, not by loud organ stops, but by playing the boys' part an octave higher. Sharp singing, which often arises from naturally defective or badly-trained ears, is cured best by checking those who can only sing loudly, and by insisting on *piano* singing. To put on more organ power makes the loud sharp singing worse.

Herr Eglinger, of Basel, whose qualifications I have referred to elsewhere, considers that flattening is generally due to fatigue. The membranes which produce the voice are not yet strong, and they relax, producing flattening. He works on the principle that children are quickly tired, and quickly rested, and gives the singing in small doses. Unfortunately, in church work the length of the dose is not a matter of choice. He notices, what others have noticed, that when the voices are divided into three parts, it is the middle part that flattens most; this is because it plays about the break. To choirmasters whose boys flatten, Herr Eglinger says:—

“Give rest; require a proper use of the registers; get sharp and exact pronunciation, especially of the consonants; and keep up with a strong hand the attention and interest of the choir.”

I close this chapter by printing a short paper on the subject kindly written for me by Mr. W. H. Richardson, formerly trainer of the celebrated Swanley Orphans' Choir, which gave concerts in all parts of the country. Mr. Richardson, while he was at Swanley, obtained results of the most remarkable excellence. At Swanley there was no selection of voices: all were made to sing, and all were individually trained, as well as collectively. “My conviction,” says Mr. Richardson, “is that there are no more defective voices than there are eyes and ears.” The Rev. W. J. Weekes, late Precentor of Rochester Cathedral, said of the Swanley boys:—

“The smaller boys were first tested—some thirty or forty

little fellows, some of them new arrivals. Here the tone, though of course not strong, was pure and sweet, such as would have done credit to cathedral boys after a couple of years' training, and they 'jumped' their intervals most clearly, lighting as full and fairly on the correct note as a bird does on a bough. Thence we moved into the larger schoolroom, where were assembled some hundred older boys, and such a body of sound, so full and pure, so free from throatiness, and so true in intonation as these hundred throats emitted, I certainly never heard from boys' voices before."

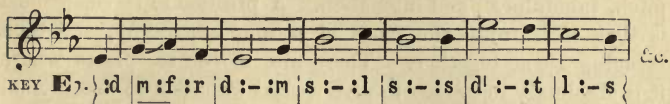
In 1885 I took the late Signor Roberti, teacher of singing in the Normal College at Turin, and an Italian composer of eminence, to hear the Swanley boys, and he afterwards wrote to Mr. Richardson :--

"I do not exaggerate in any way by saying that I found there a true perfection in tune and in rhythm, but above all, in what concerns the pure and correct emission of voices, the careful and judicious training of which confers much honour upon you, and I would be happy to see it even partly imitated by the teachers of the so-called Land of Song."

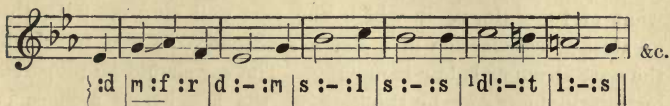
These facts are enough to prove the weight that attaches to Mr. Richardson's utterances :—

"My experience has been that flattening will give the teacher very little trouble after the pupils have been drilled with voice-training exercises, but until the voices are built and strengthened, he will have unpleasant surprises of all kinds. If he would have a reliable choir he must begin, continue, and end with regular voice training based on an undeniably good system. From the very outset the pupil should be taught to fear flat singing as a demon. With my boys I was for ever laying down the self-evident truth, 'People can endure your singing if it be tuneful, even though all other points of excellence are low, but no one can put up with your singing out of tune, except as martyrs.' The cause of flattening is always lack of culture. In the choirs I have trained it has ceased to trouble me after a few months. The habit of letting the pitch drop

fosters itself in a remarkable manner, until at last the ear of the performer is perfectly satisfied with the production of a monstrosity. In proof of this I would mention a case which has come painfully under my own notice. A number of boys known to me have been in the daily habit of singing the tune :—



and as they have only had a 'go as you please system' to hold them in, they now commence flattening at once with a *crescendo* which culminates in the second line, and creates the effect :—



The original quite gone, they quite satisfied ! The cause of continued flat singing is allowing the *bad habit*. I am not, of course, dealing with exceptional cases of natural inaptitude. These are rare, and I say this after having had some years of experience in testing individual voices. I could now with very little difficulty name the few pupils I had at Swanley who were naturally unable to sing tunefully, and I doubt not that nearly all my old scholars could do the same. They were in reality exceptions, numbering, during the whole of the time I was with them, not more than half-a-dozen.

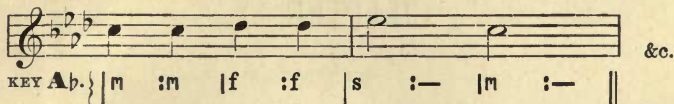
“There is one stage in the voice training where the teacher finds his pupils (boys I am speaking of, my experience with adults not having been so extensive) habitually *sharpen*. In my own neighbourhood a teacher who has commenced to properly train his boys to sing, in a conversation he had with me told me of this, to him, unexpected difficulty. To get good intonation in part-singing, I found the singing of chords a great help. The class should be divided rapidly, and one note of the



chord assigned to each section. Then it should be sung softly. This should be repeated with other chords, and followed by easy phrases. Voices do not at once blend, and until they do the singing should be never loud. I look upon the earlier work as tentative—a feeling for the beauty of perfection of pitch, tunefulness, and intonation. A practice to be condemned is that of learning the parts of a tune separately, and then bringing them together. There are, of course, places where it is absolutely necessary to give special attention to exceptional passages, but it is a mistake to teach each part as though it were an independent tune—to give the direction, which I have often heard, ‘Now sing your part, and never mind what the others are doing,’ or ‘Don’t you listen to any other part.’ This system is answerable for the most offending cases of want of tunefulness, in which one part will sing on with the greatest of satisfaction in a key a semitone from that in which the part above or below is moving. The ear should be prepared by a symphony, or by thinking of the key before a piece is commenced. My own practice has been to wait after giving the key-note for the pupils to do this. I have recently come across a method of allowing the pupils to find the tonic of a song about to be sung, which in nine cases out of ten will make the opening as ‘restless’ as the sea waves. The teacher strikes the C fork, and the tonic being F, all the pupils sing C<sup>1</sup>, B, A, G, F—doh. The C<sup>1</sup>, B, A, G, F is, I think, as likely to unsettle the ear as anything that could be imagined. The teacher should give the key-note. He may teach his pupils to use the fork if he will, but *not* in a way so exquisitely calculated to unsettle the ear when it should be strongly decided.

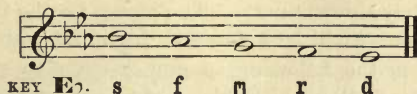
“With regard to Registers, I do not know whether the nomenclature I employed with my Swanley choir will be commended by you, but as it was successful I will describe it. The registers we called, perhaps inelegantly, ‘Top,’ ‘Middle,’ and ‘Bottom,’ these terms being handier than Upper Thin, Lower Thin, and Upper Thick. The earliest exercises were in the Top Register—that is, the Upper Thin. Boys

untrained are, taken in bulk, unconscious of the Thin Register. Having got them to sing, say C to koo, I have followed it by singing to the same syllable the tune :—



(‘Now the day is over,’—*A. & M.*), and the delight has been intense when the pupils have thus discovered how clearly and sweetly they could sing. When this is done great possibilities seem to open, and the pupil is on the road to perfection. B $\flat$  and E $\flat$  I found most convenient for change. The Small Register must have been used, as my lads sang up to C $^2$  with the greatest ease and finish, though one of our foremost teachers, in a conference I had with him on the subject, said he would stake his reputation that the small register was not employed by them. It received no name in our practices after that authoritative statement, and ever afterwards I was in dread of being called over the coals for allowing the Top register to get too high.

“Boy altos can be made to sing without flattening, though they invariably give more trouble than trebles on account of their willingness to let the lower register overlap the one above—to force upward. They should practise with the trebles such exercises as :—



so as to strengthen this part of the voice, which may be termed their flattening field.”

## CHAPTER IX.

### ON THE TRAINING OF BOYS' VOICES.

By W. H. RICHARDSON, Formerly Conductor of the Swanley Orphanage Choir.\*

ALL that a writer on the training of voices can do is to lay down general lines, and give comprehensive suggestions. The teacher, to make any use of them must be indeed a *teacher*, not a mere mechanically automatic individual of only sufficient calibre to take the directions of a writer, and give them again. He should be both enthusiastic in his work, and willing to spend his strength in patience if he would have a choir of boys to sing *reliably* well. It is of the greatest importance that work should be set out on right lines, and that a thoughtfully prepared scheme should be arranged before commencing. I would here give my experience of two choirs I had at different times in agricultural districts, and in one of them I was well satisfied with the progress we made, while in the other my work was completely thrown away. The reason for the failure in the second instance (which I foresaw from the outset) will be gathered from the following account of our plan of campaign. The choir was a village one which met for rehearsal once a week. The organist attended and presided at a harmonium, and, *nolens volens*, I had at the beginning of each practice to take the choir through the whole of the next Sunday's services. The boys' voices were, at the beginning of my connection, uncivilised,

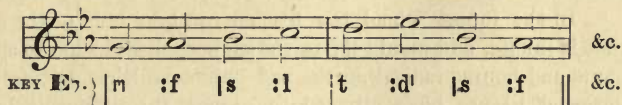
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\* Mr. Richardson has responded to my request for hints with such fulness and weight that I devote a separate chapter to his essay. In writing, he has specially had in view the difficulties of choir trainers in rural districts.



and at the end of it—fortunately the question of ways and means not allowing the interval to extend beyond a few months—were as barbarous as at the commencement. There was absolutely no chance of making a name through these youngsters; and as to voice culture! How could it be possible to attempt it after labouring through such a programme as Canticles, Hymns, Psalms, Kyrie, and Amens?

I determined never to take office again unless I could have my own way in fixing the time-table of work. My success in the other case was owing greatly to the fact that I had one night a week entirely devoted to musical training and voice culture. This did not preclude us from relieving the drudgery of work by the singing of songs and hymns, *but* it allowed me the use of an unfettered judgment in the *choice* of what should be attempted. A teacher is heavily handicapped if after getting his boys for the first time to sing in the upper thin register, he is to follow his delicate work by singing half-a-dozen verses to a tune which will in the very first verse undo all that he has done, simply because its melodic progression encourages forcing. Experienced teachers will appreciate what I say on this point. Take such a tune as:—



—a tune which inevitably causes a wrong use of the registers by inexperienced boys. The tunes selected should further the work of the exercises, not undo it, and with diligence the teacher can find suitable tunes and chants for this purpose. My advice to all teachers is that before commencing work they should insist upon conditions that do not preclude success, and that they should not spend their labour in wearying drudgery with the full consciousness that to attain it is impossible.

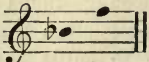
One suggestion I would make is that the choirmaster, if he be not, as is often the case in villages, also schoolmaster, would do well to enlist the services of the school teachers in the

village. It is not often practicable to have more than one—or two at the most—meetings of a choir during the week, and the length of the lesson must be, in consequence, at least an hour. For voice training in the earlier stages six lessons a week of fifteen minutes each are preferable to one of an hour and a half, and therefore I would urge the *necessity* of getting hold of the sympathies of the school teacher, and putting him on right lines to work out the choirmaster's ideas, if the offices be not united.

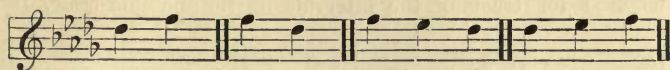
Voice work should be begun in the infant school. At Swanley it was my practice to give, I believe, daily lessons in the Infant Department, and the remarks made by visitors will bear out what I am about to say as to the possibility of getting young children to sing, and sing like little angels. I was always as pleased to exhibit my infants' vocal powers as to show those of my more advanced boys, and success was, comparatively speaking, more easily gained with them than with older boys, for inasmuch as the difficulty of registers and breaks does not exist as such with these tiny ones, and unless our plans be artificial or formed of caprice, this is what should be expected.

In the infant school the teacher can take hold of the good that is innate, and mould it; in the higher school he has to spend hours and hours eradicating the bad habits which shouting and untamed license have allowed to grow. By all means begin with the infants, and let their songs and nursery rhymes be written so as to "give them a chance."

But I am asked to say something that may be helpful to the choirmaster having to train the vocal organs of boys who are beyond infantile methods. I will therefore suppose myself for the first time before an ordinary country group of lads with all the vocal faults that now appear indigenous to the locality. I should first get them to find the Upper Thin Register, and my

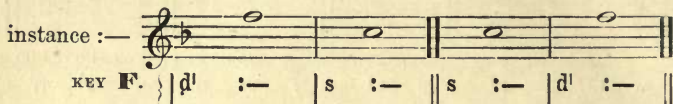
plan is to confine the work to this region  and get

the boys to sing "koo" to D, E, or F, making my own "Exercises," which are suggested by present circumstances:—



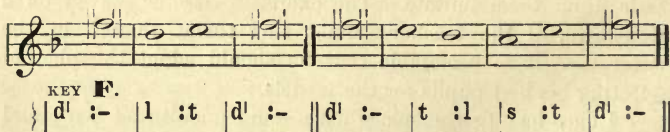


never observing a lack of clearness and purity without endeavouring to correct it. The foregoing exercises can next be used for teaching the intervals of the diatonic scale, for

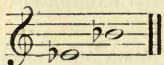


calling the notes by their names, doh soh. Here, again, the proper vowel production must be sought for, and obtained. The difficulties will be varied in this respect with the locality. Often I have met with doh-oo. This, as well as ray-ee, and other faults that need not be specified, can be corrected at once. The beautiful intonation we had at Swanley I attribute in a large measure to the care bestowed on the production of vowel sounds. There must be no division of opinion among the singers as to how any particular vowel sound should be emitted. If there be not unity in this respect the intonation suffers.

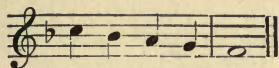
The earlier exercises should be sung in unison, a correct division into 1st, 2nd, and 3rd trebles being impossible until the boys have acquired sufficient confidence to show *what* they are naturally. I have for a long time used with advantage the single chant form for exercises, making them myself.



In order to avoid waste of time in learning exercises they should be *short*, so that they can be caught up at once.

To get boys to sing in the register below (the Lower Thin) is the next step, the exercises now being confined between  and formed in the same way as those in the higher region. The difficulty is greater in getting rough boys to use this part of the vocal score correctly.

The best way I have found to get them to discover it, is to sing—beginning at C', to koo.



KEY F. s f m r d

The notes are at first weak, and there is a tendency to “squork,” if I may so term it. These exercises must be sung softly at first, and at this stage the schoolmaster can render valuable help if he will get his boys to read from their lesson books in this register instead of in the one below it.

I have to acknowledge a debt of gratitude to one of our best and most painstaking teachers for giving me this hint. The reading will at first be weak, and in a monotone, and there being no flexibility, the boys will have difficulty in forming the usual cadence at the end of sentences, but practice will soon strengthen the weakness, and make this register as strong as the one below it. Between the one above and the one below, this “middle” one is apt to be overlooked altogether, and I have heard some fairly pleasing singing where it has not been recognised at all.

The third register (Upper Thick) should now receive attention, and in order to find it the pupils should cultivate it upwards with such exercises as—



Within the limits of a short paper, it is impossible to give more fully all the needful directions for training the voices to cover up breaks, and to change from one register to another.

Suitable tunes should now be selected, so that the aim of the exercises may be extended. Remember that it is easiest to *leap* from one register to a higher, a stepwise ascent being an insidious snare. Koo and afterwards laa such tunes as :—



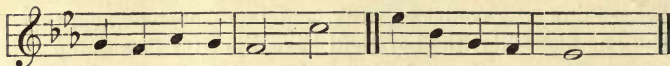
KEY C.

} | s : m | d' : s | m' : - r' | d' : s | l : l | s : d' | s : f | m : - ||

OR

KEY E $\flat$ .

} | m : r | f : m | r : - | m : - || l : s | t : d' | s : - | f : - ||



} | m : r | f : m | r : - | l : - || d' : s | m : r | d : - | - : - ||

Many ready-made exercises are to be found in any chant book, which can be used to strengthen the voice and build it. For voice exercise I like a high reciting note at the beginning, D $\sharp$ , C $\sharp$ , E $\flat$ , as by this we ensure getting the right register for the high notes, which will be a matter of doubt for some time if the question of suitability of melody be left out of calculation.

I strongly recommend the use of the time names. For some years I was prejudiced against them, but after trying them, believe them to be of the greatest value.

The teacher should give manual signs for his short exercises. Time is wasted unnecessarily if the teacher has to turn and write on the board. The objection to working through a book, only using prescribed exercises, is chiefly this—no book writer can provide for all the permutations and combinations that may arise during the actual work of teaching; it is impossible for him to anticipate them. This does not in the least detract from the value of the book, which must be the best *general* guide for by far the larger part of our teachers.

I have referred to the teaching of vowel sounds, and would say a word about consonants. My practice has been to guard against giving undue prominence to any individual letter,



and to encourage always a *simple unaffected utterance* in singing. Rolling "r's" is very well, but to precede the vowel with a sound not unlike the noise caused by springing a police rattle is neither artistic nor pleasing. My custom was to first let the pupils sing a vowel, say *aa*, and require it to be held on as long as my hand was still. A sharp movement of the hand directed when the consonant should appear, as *aa—t*, &c., the appearance and disappearance being as close together as possible. It is a difficulty with beginners to sing such words as "night," "bright," &c., holding on the middle part, or vowel. I demonstrated that the singer has nothing left to sing after having too soon disposed of the vowel. I also gave exercises in prefixing a consonant to a vowel. Other points of detail will arise, such as in the word "sing." The habit here is to make the "ng" sound throughout the greater part of the duration of the singing of the word. By analysing, and showing by copying the bad model, the teacher will convince the pupil that "ng" held on is unpleasant. In singing *laa, laa, laa*, &c., at first pupils lower and raise the jaw. This should be at once stopped. But it is impossible to anticipate every difficulty that will arise under this head. I have said enough to indicate generally my method. I do not propose to enter into the question of breathing. One thing I would say—do not try pupils by requiring them to sing long notes at first, but do get them at the beginning to "phrase" to your pattern. This will from the first get the will to control the breath taking.

By all means introduce certificates. By the examination of individuals, the teacher will get truer knowledge of his learners' powers, and will be enabled to give advice of greater value because of its assured need. Let the examination be in public—before the other pupils—and so help to beget confidence in the pupil, without which success will be limited. The teacher should never do anything to destroy the confidence of his pupils, though I am bound to admit that I have not always been free from irritability and impatience in my dealings with pupils. The work is trying, the nerves of a teacher of

singing are throughout highly strung, and very little cause is necessary to upset his equilibrium. He should therefore be ever on his guard to check any tendency to show impatience.

Never get a pupil to sing alone for the sake of showing his defects to others. No one can *sing* who does not possess a sense of his power to do so. There should be encouraged an *abandon* sort of manner. A gentleman once said to me, "I see how you make your boys sing; you tell them they can do it, and that makes them do it." The rigid watching of the beat of the conductor should not be too closely insisted on. No machine-like singing should satisfy, even though it be *correct*. The correctness of a great painter's production is not everything, and neither is it with the singer. There should be an atmosphere of the liberty of freedom.

At Swanley my work was lessened by the interest that all my colleagues took in it. A moral force was constantly brought to bear on the boys, which made them work with a will and a determination to excel. Their success was the same in other departments of work, though not so prominently placed. The music teacher who has in himself the power to draw out the latent feeling of his pupils is the one who will best succeed. I would draw my remarks to a close with this advice:—Make your choir as large as possible. Take all who will come into it, and do not go through the form of "trying" voices that have never tried themselves, and of which you can form no opinion. For adults this is a necessity, but for children it is better to get one or two per cent. of naturally defective learners, rather than to turn away all but those showing undoubtedly exceptional ability.

## CHAPTER X.

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### THE SPECIAL DIFFICULTIES OF AGRICULTURAL DISTRICTS.

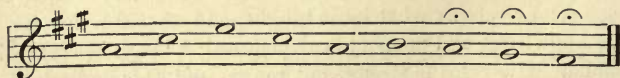
My object is to help those whose difficulties are greatest ; who, so far from being able to pick out boys of musical talent and fine voice, are obliged to accept the material that offers, often of the poorest musical description. The country boy is a more healthy animal than his brother of the town, and there is no fault to be found with the natural volume of his voice provided he can be taught to place his registers rightly, to avoid straining the thick or chest register, to pronounce and phrase properly. This is, however, what the Americans call “a large order.”

I have been fortunate in collecting information from several choirmasters in agricultural districts, who have conquered the difficulties of this task. First, I quote Mr. W. Critchley, choir-master and schoolmaster at Hurst, near Reading :—

“The rural choir-boy differs somewhat from his brethren of the town in the following particulars. As a rule, he is duller, and slower in his perception ; he is attentive and docile, but sluggish ; he retains what he is taught, and therefore, as far as mere knowledge and memory are concerned, it ‘pays’ to take him in hand. His voice is strong, but rough, and this undisciplined strength is the cause of most of the trouble he gives. Moreover, he is exposed to the weather very largely, and this causes him to be more influenced by atmospheric changes than the town boy, and prevents, in a great measure, any great delicacy of finish from being obtained. So it will be seen that the country choir-boy requires special treatment in order to produce good



results. Sometimes, when a village lies compactly together, a large amount of work can be got through similar to that which we find in towns, but generally the rural district is wide and scattered, and only a limited number of practices can be secured. Under these circumstances, I have found the best course to pursue to be somewhat as follows :—First and foremost, let the Tonic Sol-fa system be taught, it lightens the work of the choir-master in a wonderful degree, and the boys bring an intelligence to their work which is unattainable by any other means. If the system has not been taught in the day school of the parish, it should be introduced at once; if that is not practicable, the choir-boys should be taught at a second practice-night. This second practice is required in any case, if anything better than mere ‘scratch’ singing be aimed at. *All* practices should be begun by voice exercises. On the extra night a greater amount of time should be taken up with them, for to a country choir-boy, who perhaps in the day is shouting to scare birds, they are vital. The lower register of a country boy is, as a rule, coarse, so it is important to get him to use his higher register as soon as possible. Show him first of all that he has, as it were, *two voices*, and point out that he is required, as Mr. Evans observes, to use that voice which is most like a girl’s. He will be apt for some time to use this voice in the upper notes of the music only, and there will be a disagreeable transition to the lower register when the music comes down on G, or thereabouts. To conquer this, I use exercises which train the upper register *downwards*, such as :—



KEYS **A** to **F**.

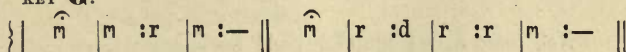
d m s m d r  $\hat{d}$   $\hat{t}_1$   $\hat{l}_1$

the object being to strengthen the upper register, and, except where the music touches D or C, to practically ‘shelve’ the lower thick register in the case of treble voices. In training upwards I insist

on easy singing, no straining. I don't mean apathetic singing, for this is especially to be fought against in the case of country boys, as there is naturally a want of 'go' about them. I mean soft singing, but energetic. I tell the boys to sing like birds, and they generally understand from this that they are to use the upper register. I do not find much difficulty with them in the way of flattening. Except in the case of the younger boys, I often hear them a little sharp. The Tonic Sol-fa method trains their *ears*, and I get them to listen, and blend their voices; above all, to get rid of apathy. And if there should be a tendency with the younger boys to sing flat, I generally find that the application of the old rules as to position, loud singing, forcing the voice, faulty breathing, and inattention will remedy the fault. If it occurs in church, a judicious use of a four-foot stop on the organ often keeps up the pitch. I find, if the melody of a chant or tune has a great many of the 'thirds' of the chords in it (I mean as distinct from the fifth, root, &c.) it is often difficult, especially on a foggy morning, to keep it in tune, *e.g.* :—



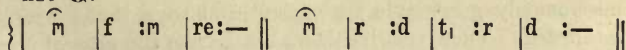
KEY **G**.



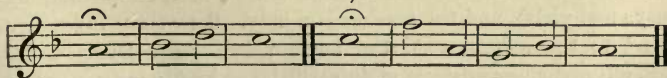
or,



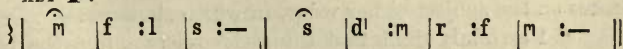
KEY **G**.



or,



KEY **F**.



This is the case in a marked degree when the reciting tone comes about the natural 'break' of the voice. The remedy for this I find to be transition into another key, one which I judge to be more congenial to the state of the boys' voices. Here is where the usefulness of the Tonic Sol-fa system to an organist comes in. A lot of practice in mental effects has a surprising result in ear training. Sometimes, however, we get a clergyman who intones badly, and then it is quite a struggle to keep in tune.

"There are a number of other little points which tell against correct singing in a country choir; the generally thick enunciation, the provincialism, the difficulty in getting open mouths. I do a lot of reading by pattern, and pay attention to initial and final consonants. Country boys neglect these more than town boys. I practise without organ as much as I can. If an instrument is used, the piano is decidedly the best. I find Gregorian singing has a strong tendency to injure purity of tone and delicacy of expression. I do as little of it as possible.

"On the second choir practice night I spoke of, it is certainly good to take up glee practice, or a simple cantata. It sustains the interest, and makes the choir a bond of union in a country village."

Not long ago I found myself by chance worshipping in a remote village in East Somerset, Churchill by name. There was, in the parish church, a choir of six boys and four probationers, who sang so slowly and sweetly, not with the luscious fulness of some boys I have heard, but with such uncommonly good style for agricultural boys, that I was much interested. These small villages have, from the present point of view, one advantage. The day schools are "mixed" (containing boys and girls), and the teacher is a lady. Both these influences tend to the softening of the boy's voice. Miss Demack, the school- and choir-mistress at Churchill, has kindly written a few notes on the subject of her work, in which she says:—

"I certainly think that the girls' voices soften the boys'.



I admit probationers at the early age of six if I find they have any voice, as I think the earlier the better. When I took my boys in hand, I found scale exercises very useful. I did not teach them any tunes until I had somewhat altered their rough voices. Another help was this: I had a girl with a particularly good voice, and made the boys imitate her as much as possible. This I found answered remarkably well. The boys seemed to adopt quite a different tone."

Miss Demack teaches singing in the school and choir by ear only, and knows nothing of the Tonic Sol-fa system.

I next give a short paper kindly sent me by Mr. George Parbery, choirmaster of the parish church, and master of the National School at Fordingbridge, Hants:—

"Dear Sir,—As choirmaster of the parish church here, and as one who takes great interest in the subject of singing in schools, I am happy to respond to your request, as we are essentially a rural district.

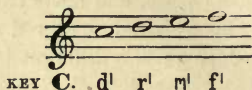
"I have occupied my position now nearly ten years, and am just beginning to find the benefit of the Tonic Sol-fa movement amongst my adult members of the choir, having now nine adults who have passed through the school with a good practical knowledge of the Sol-fa notation.

"When I commenced work here (coming from north of England) I was struck with the very disagreeable tone of the boys' and girls' voices. To say they sang flat does not convey how flat they sang, nor does it convey any idea of the tone, but the same may be heard any night at the Salvation Army meetings here. The vicar of the parish told me also upon my arrival here, that at a church in Bournemouth a former vicar used to import all his boy voices outside of Hampshire. So that you will gather that I had not a light task before me to produce a tone satisfactory to myself or the inspector. But I may safely say I have for some years satisfied myself, and last year our assistant-inspector spoke of the very beautiful quality of the boys' voices. I can assure you that it is only rarely that I find occasion to

complain of the tone. The moment I hear the objectionable tone produced, I immediately stop the singing, even if in the middle of prayers. Mine is a boys' school, but I teach the girls singing with the boys. Now as to how I produced the change:—

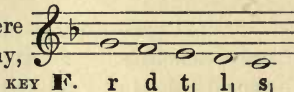
“1. I introduced the Tonic Sol-fa notation.

“2. I used to practise very frequently for a few minutes upon the modulator, making abundant use of the upper—



“3. I prohibited all shouting on high notes.

“4. Particularly was I severe upon loud singing in lower notes, say,



“5. I established a degree of sound, and have it still, what is known amongst my scholars as ‘singing in a whisper’—i.e., to produce singing as softly as possible. This idea I picked up in Cheshire from a good Tonic Sol-faist.

“6. I have one or two favourite hymns, which I always pitch higher than written, and thus compel the boys to use the upper registers. The boys know I like these hymns, and I never fail to appreciate them to the boys at the end of singing. I also have a favourite marching tune—I don’t know the name, but I believe it is often set to the hymn, ‘When mothers of Salem.’ This tune is very lofty, and I believe the boys really enjoy its loftiness, *but there must be no shouting*. When the boys displease me, I tell them they drop their jaw too much, and they instantly know what I mean.

“7. I have very little alto singing in school, for the reason that it has a tendency to encourage loudness. In my choir I arrange for three or four of the oldest boys to sing alto.

“In conclusion, I may say I am thoroughly proud of my boys’ singing from standard I. up to the top of the school, and I believe my success has been chiefly from abundant use of the modulator for scale practice, and never allowing loud singing. Proud as I am of my boys, the girls certainly excel them, and

ten years ago their tone was worse, if possible, than the boys. I have no instrument in school, but *occasionally* use a violin."

A correspondent from another agricultural county—I will not give his name—favours me with some rules which he has used more or less for thirty years. In one school taught by the writer, the inspector said he could not distinguish the boys from the girls' voices—truly a high compliment. My correspondent names a new hindrance to church music in rural places, namely, the clergyman's daughter!—

"Practise the scales up and down to the words 'la' and 'ha,' the latter for the purpose of separating the teeth. Commence at the key of C to C', then from D to D', and so on upwards as high as the voices of the boys can reach, never resting satisfied until they cover two octaves firmly. In teaching new music, and, generally speaking, in accompanying the boys, play the note they are singing and its octave above—on the stopped diapason and flute if an organ, or the corresponding stops on a harmonium. Let there be no other accompaniment, and on every occasion the octave above the note sung. This is very particular. Check one voice singing above another. Have no leaders. Stop or subdue all harsh voices, and make them listen to, and try to copy the pure notes of the flute; let the boys sing well within their strength. If you lack power, increase the number of choristers, and subdue the voices. I always choose smooth flowing chants, with the reciting note ranging from F to C. I do not care to go higher than G above the line in anthems or services, but have trained them to start on B $\flat$ , 'The Sisters of the Sea,' by Jackson.

"I never trouble about altos, they are too difficult to get, and indifferent and troublesome when obtained, but in verse parts of services or anthems, one of the best boys will supply the deficiency, and even take up the lead in a chorus.

"Choirs experience a difficulty which is not included in your list of points. I have received £60 per annum as an organist, £50 and a house. On another occasion I was offered the choir-



mastership of a church choral society of 60 members. At this time I was trainer and conductor of a choral society of 100 voices with string and wind accompaniment, the subject being *The Messiah*. Yet I was not considered competent at the church at which I played to put a tune to a hymn, but had to submit to the parson's daughter, who was qualified through taking three months' lessons from a German. On one occasion this lady went ten times through a hymn to please her father in trying to fit a four-lined tune of the wrong metre to a six-lined hymn! I offered to go through an eleventh time, but he never interfered again. I could give you many instances where these ladies themselves are the great drawback of good church singing, but on the other hand, I could mention cases where they never come near a practice, or interfere from one year's end to the other."

Knowing, as I do, the devoted way in which clergymen's daughters in many rural places train the choir, I hesitate to endorse this charge. The work needs to be done with tact and consideration. In the vast majority of cases these ladies are a great help. I do not approve the plan of playing the melody in octaves while it is being learnt, which my correspondent advocates. I give his letter as a record of earnest work.

Mr. W. W. Pearson, of Elmham, Dereham, Norfolk, writes to me as follows:—

"I have had, as you say, a great deal of experience in teaching singing, especially in rural districts; but the neighbourhood I have lived in for the last twenty years (Norfolk), is a very barren field for musical culture—the worst in my experience. The voices of those who *do* sing in this county are, on an average, a minor third lower than those of Yorkshire, North Wales, the west of England, and other places where I have had experience. They are also, for the most part, *flabby*, wanting in resonance and quality. Tenors are very scarce, and even the few who can sing in the tenor register, have not got the true tenor quality. This may be the effect of the low

elevation above the sea-level, and the damp humid atmosphere; or it may be partly due to *race*.

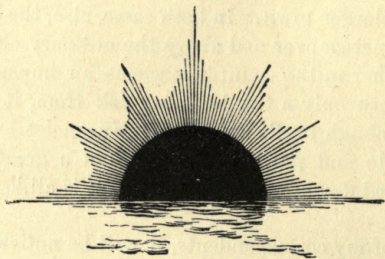
“The plan I adopt for getting boys to use their upper registers is a very old-fashioned one; but it is very effective. It is to make them sing the major diatonic scale, ascending and descending; beginning at a low pitch, and gradually raising it by a semitone at a time.”

Mr. C. Hibberd, of Bemerton, near Salisbury, whom I quote also in the chapter on “Flattening,” dwells on the difficulties of the rural choirmaster. He says:—

“I have rarely come across the soft fluty tone in the country. I once met with a boy with it in the choir at Parkstone, near Bournemouth, and another here at Bemerton, but in both cases the boys were above the average of country boys, and the village was close to a larger town. In both cases, also, the boys had good and careful practice over and above the ordinary choir practices. At places farther in the country it seems an impossibility to get the tone. With only a few boys to pick from, it is a difficulty to find boys enough to fill up ordinary vacancies. With a great deal of trouble and practice one can get a great part of the roughness toned down, and, as a rule, that is all.”

Several of my correspondents, it will be noticed, speak with great confidence of the use of the Tonic Sol-fa system in rural places. This system, useful everywhere, certainly attains its greatest usefulness in places where the task of the choirmaster reaches its highest degree of difficulty. To those whose only acquaintance with Tonic Sol-fa is a casual glance at a printed page of the new notation, it naturally seems strange that the use of a musical shorthand can affect the whole training of the boy. But behind the letters and punctuation marks, which go to make up the Tonic Sol-fa notation, there lies the Tonic Sol-fa method—a fixed and many-sided educational system, founded on the truest principles of education, carrying on simultaneously the training of the ear for tune and time, making progress sure

because gradually developing the intelligence along with the voice. With Tonic Sol-fa, also, is associated a definite system of voice-training. Tonic Sol-fa teachers are all more or less of educationists, and have caught by observation or study the teacher's art. This is the cause of their success.





## CHAPTER XI.

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### NOTES ON THE PRACTICE OF VARIOUS CHOIRMASTERS IN CATHEDRALS, &c.

I SUMMARISE here information obtained, chiefly by observation and conversation, from various trainers of boys' voices at cathedrals and collegiate churches.

#### CHAPEL ROYAL, ST. JAMES'S.

Some years ago I attended a practice of the boys, under the late Rev. Thomas Helmore. It began with slow scales sung to a light pianoforte accompaniment. These were followed by rapid runs, the key gradually rising until the highest note touched was C above the treble staff. The vocable used was "ah." After this came time exercises, solfeggios, the pointing out of notes by the boys on and between the fingers of their left hands, which represented the staff. Mr. Helmore declared that new boys while singing nearly always (1) frown, or (2) hold their heads on one side. He was strict about avoiding these faults. In going over the psalms for the day, the boys sang mostly one by one, verse after verse. This was a searching test for the boy who sang, while all the others were actively criticising. The boys practised secular music by way of change. Four of them were monitors, four fags, and two probationers. The tone was refined and pure, Mr. Helmore himself being a good singer.

#### ST. PAUL'S CATHEDRAL.

Here, owing to the size of the building, a tremendous volume of shrill tone has to be cultivated, which in the practice

room is sometimes overwhelming. The practice I heard began with slow scales sung to "ah" (pianoforte accompaniment) ranging over two octaves, C to C<sup>2</sup>; each key between C to C<sup>1</sup> was taken, and the scale sung ascending and descending. This was loud singing, but not shouting. Then came agility exercises in the form of chords, rapid scales, &c., sung still to "ah." This daily "tuning-up" lasted ten minutes. Then (incidentally affording rest to the boys) came a short lesson on theory. Boys were called up in turn to write notes, signs, &c., on the black-board. Practice now began. The boys sing a new piece to words at once, never sol-fa'ing. They seldom try a piece more than three times before it is heard at the cathedral. They sit during rehearsal, standing at the Gloria Patri. The boys have a daily practice of an hour-and-a-half.

#### WESTMINSTER ABBEY.

The refined style of the boys trained by Dr. Bridge is well known. The abbey is small enough to allow the graces of singing to be cultivated. In the music room there are two rows of desks facing the same way, so that Dr. Bridge, sitting at his cottage piano, can cast a side glance full upon the boys. Two practices are held daily; one from nine till ten a.m. is spent in getting up the service music. The afternoon practice, at the close of evensong, is chiefly devoted to theory. A card hanging up on the wall shows exactly how the time of the afternoon practice is apportioned between the study of intervals, and scales, chanting, responses, manuscript exercises, the singing of Concone's solfeggios, and the practice of secular music. The excellent phrasing and pure tone are partly due to the practice of secular music, which gives elasticity and gentleness to the boys' voices. No formal system of voice-training is in use. The boys enter at from 9 to 10½, not older. A new boy is placed in the middle of the row of choristers, so as to excite his imitative faculty to the utmost. Twenty boys is the full number, but only twelve of these are full choristers, the others being nominally on probation, a plan which serves to keep up the discipline.

## LINCOLN'S INN CHAPEL.

There are twelve boys here. They come, with a fair knowledge of music, at about nine years of age, and receive from Dr. Steggall, or his assistants, three lessons of about two hours each every week. On Sunday, at the close of the morning service, there is a rehearsal with the men of the music for the afternoon, and for the morning of the following Sunday. The boys' practices are held in the choir room, where Dr. Steggall, seated at a venerable Broadwood grand, coaches his little men, with care and neatness. On Saturdays, when half their lesson is done, the boys walk across to the chapel, and go through the Sunday's music with the organ. A pupil mounts to the instrument, while Dr. Steggall, book in hand, paces the aisle, or retires towards the communion table, constantly interrupting the singing to correct faults, or improve delivery. Meanwhile, the organ is played quite softly, that the voices may stand out clearly. Constant care is taken to prevent clipping of words in the most familiar parts of the service.

## THE TEMPLE CHURCH.

Dr. E. J. Hopkins, himself an ex-choir-boy of the Chapel Royal, realises here his ideal of "quality, not quantity."\* He lays stress on the fact that he takes his boys at eight years of age. For a year or more, however, they are probationers. They do not wear surplices, although they sit close to the choir. They undergo daily drill in musical theory and voice-training, but in church they have no responsibility, and do little more than listen. When, however, the voice of one of the elder boys breaks, a probationer takes his place, and is much better for the training. The practices occupy an hour-and-a-half every afternoon. They are held in the little choir vestry, near the organ, where there is a cottage pianoforte, flanked by a couple of long music desks, at which the boys stand as they sing. They are taught in groups, according to the stage they have reached, and spend the lesson time in practising scales, voice exercises, pieces of music, and studying notation. The voices are practised up to A. On

\* Dr. Hopkins died in 1901.



Saturdays there is a rehearsal in the church, with the organ and the men of the choir.

#### LINCOLN CATHEDRAL.

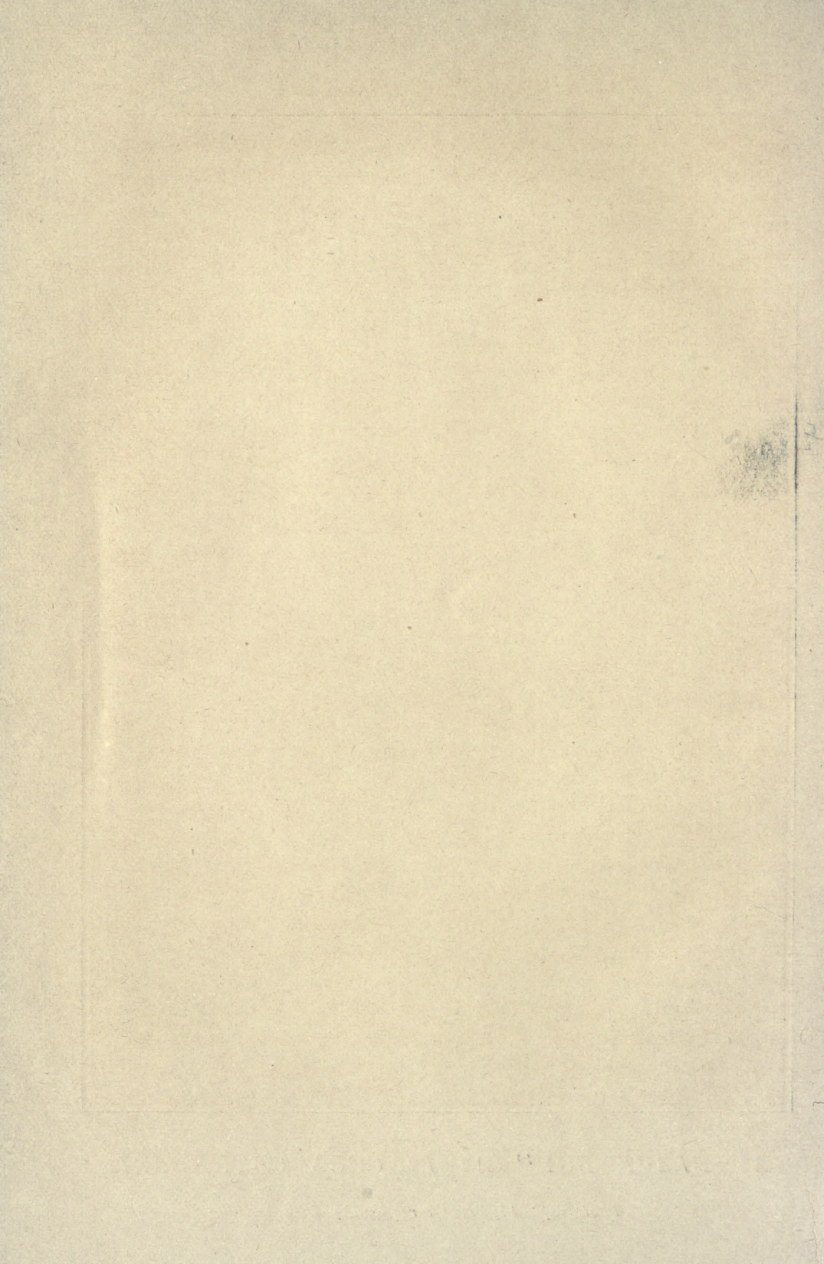
The choir here, directed by the venerable organist, Mr. J. W. M. Young, is noted for its chanting, which all choir-masters ought to hear.\* Mr. Young has made a special study of the Psalms, and changes speed and force frequently with the change of attitude in the psalmist. The recitation is delivered at the pace of ordinary speech, with elocutionary pauses as needed; it is sung neither faster nor slower than the cadence. Hence the whole effect is reverent and impressive. Mr. Young's published Psalter and Chants (Novello) should be studied, but the great excellence of his work can only be appreciated by a visit to Lincoln. All compilers of Psalters make rules, but Mr. Young carries them out. Mr. Young, who was a choir-boy at Durham more than fifty years ago, under Henshaw, tells me that it was no uncommon thing in his day for the boys to have three practices—8.30 to 10, 11 to 12, and 6 to 8. This in addition to the two daily services. All the boys attended the first, the younger boys the second, and the solo boys the third practice. As far as I know, we have no such severe training now. Mr. Young likes to get his boys at eight; for two years, although they wear surplices, they do not sing much. The sixteen boys receive free education, and board, pocket-money, and a present of £10 when their voices break. The younger boys are called "Burgersh-chanters," and wear surplices. The four senior boys are called "choristers," and wear black cassocks of a peculiar shape. In the town they are familiarly known as "black boys." The choristers attend a day-school with other boys who speak the Lincolnshire dialect; in this they suffer, for, as Mr. Young says, purity of vowels and beauty of tone go together. One of his maxims is, "use the lips as little as possible in singing; do all you can with the tongue. While the vowel sound is going on, the tongue should lie perfectly flat and *absolutely motionless*, the tip of it touching

\* Mr. Young is now dead.



A "BLACK BOY" AT LINCOLN CATHEDRAL.

*Photographed by Mr. George Hadley, Lincoln.*





the roots of the lower teeth as lightly as a feather. When the word is to be finished, the tongue must move with the greatest rapidity, get done with the consonant of the next word, and resume its flat position again for the vowel. The tongue should *never* move slowly. The younger boys use a small hand-glass for certain exercises, so that they may see exactly the position of the tongue, the parting of the lips, and the form of the mouth for the different vowels. More progress will be made with the glass in one week than can be made in two or three months without it." The boys practise an hour-and-a-half each day. Mr. Young puts a high finish on all his work. Mozart's "Ave Verum" was sung on the day of my visit with infinite refinement. At one point the boys took a portamento—a grace which very few choirmasters would attempt with boys.

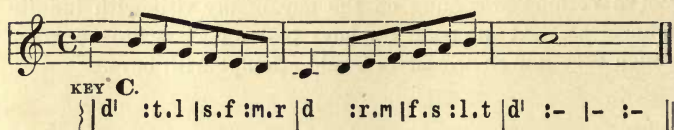
MAGDALEN COLLEGE, OXFORD.

Here I was delighted with the tone of the boys, but found little evidence of formal voice-training. The boys enter young, insensibly fall into the good vocal habits of the elder boys, and do not seem to need technical work. Indeed, two services and a rehearsal each day for eight months of the year make it necessary to economise the voices. Dr. Varley Roberts, an exceptionally good choirmaster, likes to take boys at from 10½ to 11 years of age, and prefers that they shall not have been in any choir. The place of the break, he says, differs, but as a rule it is at A or B flat. The boys can sing chromatic scales, unaccompanied, up or down, in perfect tune. When they Sol-fa it is by the movable *do*. Dr. Roberts teaches the boys to listen to and feel chords. Striking a chord, he will ask, "How many notes?" "Sing the second," and so on. This he regards as invaluable for improving the ear. The choristers attend Magdalen College School, where they mingle with other boys,

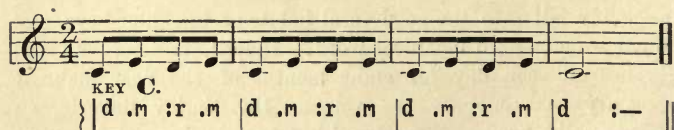
yet, though they are withdrawn from school for several hours each day, they are constantly outstripping the other boys and winning scholarships.

#### CHRIST CHURCH, OXFORD.

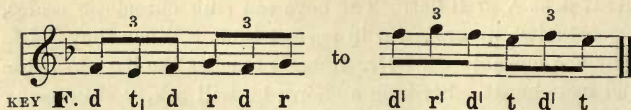
The boys rehearse in a small but lofty room. There is a double row of desks and seats down each side, facing each other. Dr. C. H. Lloyd\*sits at a small pianoforte, placed across one end of the seats, thus commanding all the boys with his eye. The "tuning-up" exercises lasted ten minutes, and began with this exercise to "ah"—



This exercise, begun in C, was carried up gradually to B<sub>b</sub> above. It was sung first with a *dim.* going down, and a *cres.* going up, and then the opposite. Then came an ascending, followed by a descending scale, similarly varied in key and expression. The next exercise was—



which was transposed gradually upwards, being sung to "ah." Next a triplet exercise—



At the higher part the second trebles sang a third below. Then followed the chromatic scale, up and down. Dr.

\* Dr. Lloyd is now at Eton.

Lloyd is not troubled much with flattening; when it occurs the men are more likely to cause it than the boys. They habitually sing the Litany, which lasts fifteen minutes, unaccompanied, and if they flatten at all, it is not more than a semitone. There is an unaccompanied service once a week. I noticed that breathing-places were marked in the anthems, and notes likely to give trouble were marked with a circle. Dr. Lloyd was by no means tied to the pianoforte during rehearsal, and frequently left his seat, and paced up and down, beating time while the singing went on. Theoretical questions on the pieces in hand were addressed to individual boys. These boys are the sons of professional men, and come from all parts of the country. There are now three undergraduates at Christ Church, who have been choir-boys. In the choir, on the day of my visit, was a boy of seventeen, who had sung for nine years; his voice had not yet begun to go. The curious custom is observed here of dividing the Psalms (between Decani and Cantoris) at the colon, instead of at the verse. It requires great readiness, and for those Psalms which are written in parallelisms, it is most effective.

#### CANTERBURY CATHEDRAL.

The boys here are divided into ten choristers and fourteen probationers. The choristers are on the foundation, and receive a stipend; the probationers get their schooling only. The choristers wear trencher caps and gowns; the probationers flannel caps, bearing the arms of the cathedral. The boys are nearly all from the city; there is no boarding-school. The lower floor of the choir-school is used for the ordinary instruction, which is conducted by Mr. Plant, an alto in the cathedral choir, and the upper floor is used as a music-room. Here the boys receive four or five lessons a week from Dr. Longhurst,\* and the probationers have also a lesson by themselves. All the choristers learn the violin; this has been the practice for many years. When, at festivals, there is a band in the cathedral, the strings are made up largely from old choristers, most of whom

\* Dr. Longhurst died in 1904.



go into business in the city. A system of rotation is adopted ; thus, although there are twenty-four boys, not more than fourteen sing at any one service, the rest are at work at their ordinary lessons. A considerable drainage of boys takes place to the King's School, the leading grammar school in Canterbury. The choristers often leave to enter this school when their voices are in their prime.

Dr. Longhurst takes the boys very young ; as soon after seven as possible. In choosing a boy, he requires both voice and ear to be good. Sometimes a boy excels in the one direction and not in the other ; he can sing sweetly, but cannot imitate notes struck at random on the pianoforte, or else he has a poor voice and a good ear. But both endowments are necessary for a chorister. Dr. Longhurst, who was himself a boy at Canterbury, had a compass at that time of two-and-a-half octaves. As his voice changed he passed from first to second treble, then sang alto for seven years, and at last settled to tenor. He does not regard boy altos as desirable in cathedrals, but in parish churches, where no adult male altos are to be had, they are, no doubt, in place. Dr. Longhurst tells me that as a result of forty-eight years' experience, he can tell by the look of a boy whether he will make a chorister. There is something about the brows and eyes, and general contour of the face which guides him. He is never mistaken. Some time since a clergyman with whom Dr. Longhurst happened to be staying, ridiculed the idea that the musical capability of boys can be judged by their looks. He took Dr. Longhurst into the village school, and invited him to pick out the boys of the choir as they sat among others at their lessons. This Dr. Longhurst did quite correctly. He has no knowledge of phrenology, and the faculty has come to him simply as the result of long experience.

On the day of my visit I heard the boys practise in their lofty music-room. Dr. Longhurst sat at the grand pianoforte, and the boys were grouped in fours or fives round four music-stands, on which the large folio voice parts, in type or MS., were placed. These desks stood on either side of the piano, so

that the boys looked towards Dr. Longhurst. Not many voice exercises are used, nor is there any talk about the registers. Pure tone is required, and the boys have not "to reason why." Six or seven of the youngest boys took no part in the practice of the service music. When the elder boys had done, the younger came forward and sang some solfeggio exercises. As a help in keeping time the boys clapped their hands sometimes at the first of the bar, and beat the pulses of the music. In the single voice parts, with long rests, this is a help. The boys do not sing any secular music. At one time they did, but now, with the schooling, the ordinary practices, and the violin lessons, there is no time. Flattening does not often occur. As a rule, when they intone on G, the G remains to the end. The practice of singing the service unaccompanied on Fridays all the year round, and on Wednesdays in addition during Lent, must have a bracing effect on the choir. I was myself present on a Wednesday in Lent, and could detect no falling in pitch. The boys at Canterbury do not appear to receive much formal voice-training, and I attribute the excellent quality of their singing to two facts. First, Dr. Longhurst has evidently a knack of discerning a promising voice; and second, having established a tradition of good singing, the boys, entering at an early age, insensibly fall into it.

#### DR. BUCK'S BOYS AT NORWICH.

I have gathered from Mr. A. R. Gaul, Mus.B., of Birmingham, some particulars of the work of Dr. Buck, organist of Norwich Cathedral, who was known forty or fifty years ago all over the country as a trainer of boys' voices. Mr. Gaul was a boy at Norwich under Dr. Buck, and underwent the Spartan training which produced such notable results. "No chest voice above F or G" was his rule, and the flute-like voice, which goes by so many names, and is yet so unmistakable when heard, was developed in all the choristers. Dr. Buck had an endless number of contrivances for teaching his boys right ways. Each of them carried about him a pocket looking-glass, and at practice was taught to hold it in his hand, and watch his mouth as he sang.

One finger on top of the other was the gauge for opening the mouth transversely, while nuts were held in the cheeks to secure its proper longitudinal opening. To look at the boys during this exercise, one might think they had the face-ache! However, no joking over these matters was allowed; there was a penny fine for forgetting the looking-glass once, and a twopenny fine for forgetting it a second time. To prevent the use of too much breath in singing, Dr. Buck would take a piece of tissue paper, the size of a postage stamp, hang it by a fine thread in front of the mouth, and make the boys sing to it without blowing it away. Tongue-drill consisted in regular motions of the unruly member, until the boys were able to make it lie flat down at the bottom of the mouth, and raise it to the upper teeth as required. It was a daily plan to practise certain passages with the lips entirely closed, this was done to prevent the objectionable quality of voice resulting from any stoppage of the nasal organs. There was no *sol-fa*ing; various words were used at scale-practice, chosen to develop the vowels, while a code of troublesome words and endings of words was drawn up, and repeated daily by the boys in the speaking-voice, so as to secure clear enunciation. I have more than once seen and heard it stated that Dr. Buck used to make his boys sing through the nose, with closed mouth, in order to get the higher register, but Mr. Gaul does not remember this.\* Dr. Haydn Keeton informs me that they had boy-altos at Norwich in Dr. Buck's time, so that he must have had more boys than usual to train.

#### SALISBURY.

A conversation with Mr. C. L. South, the organist and choirmaster, shows him to be a careful and able worker. The boys, who are boarded in the choir school, come from various parts. They are received at from 8 to 11 years; not over 11 unless the boy is very good and forward in music. The boys are chosen for their voices, but given two boys of equal voices, the one who knows most music would be selected. The music practice is an hour a day for five days of the week, under

\* See note by Mr. F. Cambridge, p. 92.



Mr. South himself. "I recognise," he says, "two registers in boys' voices, chest and head, and with careful practice you can get the voices so even that you can hardly tell where one ends and the other begins. The great thing, I believe, is to make the boys sing softly, and to get their register even throughout." Mr. South adds that the imitative power of boys is so strong that the younger ones fall into the habits of the elder ones, and thus make formal teaching about the registers less necessary. For vocal practice he uses Stainer's and Concone's Exercises, also solos like "Jesus, Saviour, I am Thine," and "Let the Saviour's outstretched arm" (both from Bach's *Passion*), as well as Handel's "Rejoice greatly," besides florid choruses from the *Messiah*. These are more interesting than formal studies, and they bring out the same points of breathing, phrasing, pronunciation, and expression. He sometimes introduces a song of this kind into the service as an anthem. On one occasion, when thirteen boys had sung one of the Bach songs in unison, a member of the congregation asked the name of the soloist. The voices were so perfectly blended that they sounded like one. The full number of boys is eighteen, of whom two at least sing solos. Mr. South does not use nor like boy altos. The service music is selected on eclectic principles, and covers the ground from Gibbons to Villiers Stanford. The boys sometimes give concerts, performing such cantatas as Smart's *King Rene's Daughter*, and Mendelssohn's "Two-part Songs."

DR. BUCK, OF NORWICH.

The recent publication of Dr. Buck's memoirs (Zechariah Buck, Mus.D., a centenary memoir, by F. C. Kitton: Jarrold, 1899) sheds further light upon the practice of this eminent trainer of boys' voices. It was while Dr. Buck, a poor boy, was singing for his own pleasure in a Norwich street, that the organist of the Cathedral tapped him on the shoulder and made a chorister of him. Dr. Buck became a chorister in 1807, and resigned the organ in 1877, his work being thus an unbroken

record of seventy years. With the help of his articted pupils he managed the music of several of the Norwich city churches, as well as of the Cathedral, and for this purpose had a number of trial boys, or triers (known as "Buck's devils"), always in training. In the fifties he had as many as 60 or 70; later he had about twenty. The Cathedral choristers numbered only a dozen. The notes of Dr. Buck's life were an exceedingly thorough study of voice production, strict discipline, and unsparing, almost unreasonable work for himself and the boys. The time table of daily duty was, 9 to 9.45, scale practice; 10 to 11, morning service; 11 to 12.30 or 1, music practice; 2 to 3.45, music; 4 to 5, evening service; 5 to 6.30 or 7, ordinary studies with the schoolmaster. Mr. A. R. Gaul says that during thirteen years as boy and articted pupil, his whole holidays did not amount to thirty-one days. With all this work Dr. Buck was exceedingly careful in sparing the voices of his boys. Each boy never practised for more than ten minutes, after which he had a rest. He objected to the schoolmaster flogging his boys, not from any consideration for their feelings, but because screaming would injure their voices. His articted pupils conducted the individual training of the boys, Dr. Buck coming in at the close of the lesson. No forcing was allowed. Dr. Buck was organist of the Cathedral, but he scarcely ever played at the service, preferring to stand at a spot where only the boys could see him, and telegraph his signals to them. The raising of the left hand meant "bad tone;" of both hands, "very bad tone."

As to voice production, he used various devices to make the boys open their mouths—beans, marbles, nuts; but at last settled on a little boxwood mouthpiece, which was inserted between the teeth. The head register was taught by singing with the mouth shut, and opening it when the sound had been obtained. "Show six teeth" was a constant saying of Dr. Buck, and this meant six both at top and bottom. Tongue drill consisted in placing the tip so that it touched the top of the front upper teeth, and then laying it flat in the mouth. Each boy

held a penny mirror in his hand while doing this, and Dr. Buck, to emphasise matters, would insert a pencil or his own fingers in the mouth. The practice of shakes, florid runs, and cadenzas was necessary in the early part of Dr. Buck's career: but the fashion in music soon altered, and such complex vocal agility is not now needed in choir-boys. As to breathing, the boys were told to inhale through both mouth and nose, and keep the shoulders still. There were no "solo boys" at Norwich, because all were expected to be able to take a solo. To amuse Sir Julius Benedict, Dr. Buck placed three boys behind a screen and made them sing a florid solo. Benedict held that it was one voice. In practising a solo Dr. Buck would often have six boys engaged, making them take up passages in turn, so that they sang, rested, and listened. Dr. Buck trained alto boys as well as treble. He himself had a rich alto voice. The boy who was to sing the solo at the afternoon Sunday service was generally shut up in an inner room in Dr. Buck's house and fed from his table, so that his voice should be clear. Boys who were hoarse had cloves and gum arabic given them, and a delicate boy was supplied with a "pocket pistol" containing port wine, which he swallowed just before his solo. The best boys would sing up to C freely in such a solo as "The marvellous work." There was a short practice in Dr. Buck's house before each Sunday service, and the solo boy was taken by himself. These practices were chiefly unaccompanied. Dr. Buck would strike the chord, and leave the boys to go on. Clear enunciation of consonants was always a point. To encourage it an exercise to *d m s m* was sung to the sounds ack, ock, ook, eek, first slowly, then quicker. In the long note on "wait," in "O rest in the Lord," Dr. Buck had a *cres.* and *dim.*, so that the sound ended quite softly; but he listened for the "t," and complained if he did not hear it. Rehearsals with the men were frequent. A lay clerk says that in 1867 they *averaged* nineteen a month. The boys were rewarded for good work. Half-a-crown for a well-executed shake, and a threepenny piece for a well-sung solo are spoken of. No scarves or comforters were allowed to be worn.



In 1819, when he was first appointed, Dr. Buck made a tour of the cathedrals, at his own expense, to gather experience. Ever after he was a student. When an Italian teacher of note visited England, he would go up to town and take lessons. As an articulated pupil came near the end of his time Dr. Buck would take him to London for two or three weeks, and let him hear a lot of good music, paying all expenses. To enlist the imagination of the boy, so as to get him to impersonate the situation described by the words, was always Dr. Buck's aim. To illustrate a penitential psalm he would describe the captivity of the Jews till the boys dropped tears. To get a boy to realise the words "Without Thee all is dark," Dr. Buck shut him in a cupboard. Every phrase was made a study, not only for its vocal shaping, but for the dramatic motive which prompted it. The result of this minute work was, as may be imagined, solo singing of a very high order, which sent the name and fame of Dr. Buck all over the country.

#### DR. VARLEY ROBERTS'S METHOD.

"A Treatise on a Practical Method of Training Choristers," by Dr. Varley Roberts, trainer of the superlatively excellent boys of Magdalen College, Oxford (London: Henry Frowde), is designed for parish choirs as well as cathedrals. Dr. Roberts' advice is to take boys of strong constitution. Test their articulation with difficult words like "rhythm" or "shrill;" strike notes at random on the pianoforte for them to imitate; as a more difficult test strike triads and ask the pitch name of each of the three constituent notes.

Make the rehearsals short and frequent. Use a pianoforte. The American organ and pipe organ are both undesirable. Vary the work at practice: Grammar (at blackboard), voice exercises, music reading, exercises, and service music by turn. In a large choir containing thirty-eight boys, Dr. Roberts arranged them in four sections according to their attainments. The boys of the lowest section received a halfpenny for each attendance at rehearsal, the next section a penny, the next three-halfpence,

and the highest twopence. The movable *do* is the best system. If the boys have learned Tonic Sol-fa in their day-school it will be all the better for the choirmaster. The fixed *do* can never yield satisfactory results.

Dr. Roberts' teaching on the registers is distinctive. He holds that the boy has two registers—the chest from middle C up to A, and the head from B up to high A. He is aware that some choirmasters carry the head voice down so low as practically to abolish it; but he finds that if such notes as G and A (2nd line and 2nd space of treble staff) are sung in the head voice they are weak and unsteady. He is therefore against abolishing the chest voice, but would have it always soft, so as to balance in power the head voice. This last voice is to be discovered by singing the downward scale from high F, and is to be cultivated by downward, not upward, scales. The syllable *koo* or (as he spells it) *coo*, is recommended for this exercise. Many quotations from well-known melodies are given to show which register is to be used. A phrase in which A (or exceptionally B—2nd space or 3rd line of treble staff) is the highest note is marked "Chest." A phrase mainly above A is marked "Head." I cannot help feeling that this mapping out of phrases between the two registers will result in a bad break—that is, if the boys have Dr. Roberts' exercises and examples before them. I even venture to speculate whether Dr. Roberts' "soft chest voice" is not the "head voice," or "lower thin register" of other teachers.

As to boy altos, Dr. Roberts would only tolerate them as a last resource when men altos cannot be had. The reason he gives for this is that he does not like them. He thinks a trio for A.T.B., with a woman or boy alto on the top part, sounds bad.

The book contains a valuable series of exercises on breath control, articulation, accentuation, and flexibility; chanting, expression, and phrasing. The exercises are published separately. Dr. Roberts' position, and the well-known results of his work, make this a standard book which all choirmasters should have.

DR. A. MADELEY RICHARDSON.

Dr. Richardson, organist and director of the choir at St. Saviour's Collegiate Church, Southwark (the Cathedral for the new diocese of South London, now being constructed), has lately published a little book on "Choir Training, based on Voice Production" (Vincent), which is thorough, full of detail, and in parts quite scientific. Singing at sight, notation, ear training, &c., are not touched. The problem of choir improvement is summed up, according to Dr. Richardson, in two words—"voice production." He begins with the management of the rehearsal. Let the boys face the choirmaster; let them stand on Decani and Cantoris sides, with music desks so that their hands are free. The desks should be raised one above the other. If they are on a level, then the choirmaster should be seated on a little platform. He should have a pianette before him, but the boys must be trained to do without the instrument. A blackboard and chalk are necessary. For the full practice in the church, wheel a pianoforte, if needed, into the centre of the chancel. On no account must the organ be used; it covers up the deficiencies which a good trainer wants to hear. In choosing choir-boys, take those who are healthy and intelligent; the sound of the untrained voice is no guide. Take them at 10 or 11, not earlier. To prevent them leaving, give deferred payment, crediting a boy with so much per month. Keep an account of moneys due posted up in the vestry, for the boys to see. As to balance of voices, the boys (not including probationers) should equal the sum of the adult voices. Probationers should equal a quarter of the total number of boys.

Breathing is the first point in vocal management that Dr. Richardson attacks. He tells his boys to fill the lower part of the lungs chiefly, and likes all three forms of breathing—clavicular, lateral, and abdominal—to be combined. The spirometer conveniently registers the progress made by boys in breathing power. The position of the body comes next: this should be easy and natural. The causes of husky, throaty, and



nasal tone are next discussed. There is a long and careful explanation of resonance, of vowel tone, of the registers. On the last point, Dr. Richardson says that the chest register in the boy begins at low B flat, and extends three tones upwards, to F flat. The Middle Register is from E natural up to D, and the Head Register from E flat up to B flat. In a well-trained voice, he says, no break should be heard anywhere.

Dr. Richardson admits the existence of alto boys, but is in favour of having this part taken by men. His reason is that to train alto boys would throw extra work upon the choirmaster, who now concentrates his attention, at the boys' practices, upon the treble part. The adult alto voice, he says, can be made. There are plenty of baritones who can learn to sing alto.

Voice exercises are next treated. The figures derived from the octave, the scale, and arpeggios are shown, and examples given. There is a section on the rendering of hymns, in which points of phrasing are minutely discussed, and quotations of common pitfalls given. One useful remark made, is that notes must be held to their full length, not dropped when three quarters or half their value has expired. The rendering of Responses, &c., is next considered, and this compact and thoughtful little book closes with the subject of chanting. Here an earnest endeavour is made to show how the recitation should be delivered. Choirmasters should get this book; it is full of closely-packed experience.

#### CHAPEL ROYAL, ST. JAMES'S.

Dr. Creser is now organist. Being allowed to attend a rehearsal of the boys, I found him sitting at the cottage piano, the ten boys close around him. First came voice exercises:—Slow scales up and down, then vocal figures taking the voices up to C above the staff. These exercises are to "ah." When new music is Sol-fa'ed it is by the movable *do*. The rehearsing of the service music is very searching. Chants, hymns, canticles, and anthems are all gone over. For an hour and a half on four or five afternoons a week the boys are practised in the vestry of

\* Dr. Creser retired in 1902.

the Chapel Royal. A good deal of time is spent in hearing them chant singly, so as to give them independence, and cure the habit of relying on a leader, which is so apt to be formed. During the singing, Dr. Creser touches the piano slightly, just enough to suggest the full harmonies, but from time to time he leaves off playing. The boys must not lean on the instrument.

PETERBOROUGH CATHEDRAL.

Dr. Haydn Keeton, who has been organist and choirmaster here for nearly thirty years, has produced a "Chorister's Singing Method" (J. Curwen & Sons), which sums up his experience, the 170 exercises having been written at various times for his own boys. There are tables of notes, and a few short hints; but the book is mainly a collection of studies. First come a graded series of monotone time exercises. Then the scales are gone over; next come intervals, with systematic exercises on each. Next, phrasing exercises; after that flexibility exercises; next to that, duets and trios in canon and free forms, closing with some words on chanting, pronunciation, and breathing.



## CHAPTER XII.

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### NOTES ON THE PRACTICE OF VARIOUS CHOIR- MASTERS IN PARISH CHURCHES.


IN the course of journeys and interviews extending over many years I have gathered much experience from choirmasters, and have watched and noted their plans. Here follow some of the results of this work. The churches described are some of them small, and but little known. This fact, however, does not affect the value of the experience. The highest degree of credit is due to the choirmaster who obtains good results from poor materials, and this book is especially intended to help those who have to make the best of ordinary opportunities.

#### LEEDS PARISH CHURCH.

This church has long been noted for its music, which is sung in cathedral style. There are about thirty boys, whose voices, even up to A, are round and clear, and throughout are big, true, and rich. Notable features of the style of the choir under Dr. Creser,\* are the long *dim.* cadences in responses, and the independence which enables the singers to go on without the organ, if the expression suggests it. At the rehearsal in the parochial room Dr. Creser sits at the grand piano with the boys in their cantoris and decani places on each side of him just as in church. The boys rehearse five days a week after evensong, and the juniors have an additional practice. After Saturday evensong there is a full practice with the men. All the boys are trebles. Yorkshire is about the only district in England which produces adult male altos. The boys are chiefly promoted from district churches. They live at their homes, and receive

\* Dr. Creser is now in London.



a free education—the seniors in the Leeds middle-class school, and the juniors in the parish church school. There is also a small salary paid quarterly, and when a boy leaves he receives from £15 to £25 if an ordinary chorister, and £50 if a good solo boy. Fines are imposed by the precentor for misbehaviour or mischievous tricks in church or precincts, but not for mistakes in singing. Dr. Creser teaches sight-singing on the lines of Curwen's "How to Read Music." The boys use the old notation, but have learnt it through Tonic Sol-fa, using the course entitled "Crotchets and Quavers." Occasionally the whole rehearsal consists of sol-fa'ing. In every difficulty as to key relationship the Sol-fa makes matters clear. Dr. Creser was first led to use Tonic Sol-fa by noticing how easy it made the minor mode. The junior boys are always taught by Dr. Creser. Until the voices settle he would on no account delegate them to an assistant. The two chief rules of voice-training are to forbid forcing the chest register above  and to begin scales at the top. Flattening takes place occasionally, but it is nearly always the fault of the congregation, who drag the pitch down. The arrangement of the music-library here is a model of order.

ST. PETER'S, EATON SQUARE, LONDON.

Here, under the direction of Mr. de Manby Sergison,\* a very fine Anglican service is maintained. There are twenty boys, and a few probationers. The boys have an hour's practice every day, and sing the Psalms and a hymn at the daily choral service. Formerly a choir boarding-school was kept up, but this was abolished, being found to be too expensive. Now the boys are selected from schools in and near the parish, and Mr. Sergison finds the ordinary London boy equal to all the demands of the church. When the choir-school was given up he was able within a month to prepare an entirely new set of boys, so proficient that the congregation scarcely noticed a difference. The vocal practice of the boys includes "Concone's Exercises," and their phrasing in the service music is very good. The full

\* Mr. Sergison has now left Eaton Square.

choir sings on Sundays and Saints' Days, and their rehearsal takes place once a week in the church, Mr. Sergison being at the organ. In the chapter on the management of choir-boys I have quoted some wise remarks by Mr. Sergison, which explain his success as a choirmaster.

ST. MARK'S COLLEGE, CHELSEA.

This is a Training College for schoolmasters, which has long been noted for its musical services. Mr. Owen Breden, the present organist and choirmaster, is the successor of Dr. Hullah, Mr. May, and the Rev. F. Helmore. The choir-boys, who number 26, only sing on Sundays. They are drawn from the practising school, which contains 800 boys. They enter the choir at nine years of age, and there are always six or eight probationers, who attend the practices and are ready to fill vacancies. Thus a good style of singing is maintained. People say to Mr. Breden, "There is no telling one voice from another, your boys are so much alike." At the bi-weekly practice with Mr. Breden the boys have voice-training. They sing to *la* and sol-fa syllables scales gradually rising. They are not trained above G, but if a boy has a good G he can always go higher. The boys can all read from the Sol-fa modulator, and Mr. Breden gives them ear-tests. The alto part is taken entirely by boys at St. Mark's. The choir-boys, past and present, perform an operetta in costume every Christmas. Anthems like Macfarren's "The Lord is my Shepherd," Bennett's "God is a Spirit," Goss's "O Saviour of the world," &c., are sung unaccompanied. In fact, whenever the organ part merely duplicates the voices, they take the opportunity at St. Mark's to enjoy the pure chording of human voices.

ST. MARY'S CHURCH, BERLIN.

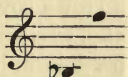
My friend, Herr Th. Krause, the organist and choirmaster of this church, allowed me to attend a rehearsal of the eighty boys and twenty men who form his fine choir. The large number of boys is explained by the fact that nearly half of them are altos.

The motet of the Lutheran church is invariably unaccompanied. It closely resembles in form our anthem, but the German Protestants look upon the *a capella* style, which continues the tradition of the Sistine Chapel at Rome, as the purest and highest in church music. On no account would they use the organ to accompany a motet. This gives rise to elaborate compositions, often like Mendelssohn's "Judge me, O God," in eight parts. By treating the boys and men as separate choirs, each in four parts, and getting responses between them, a variety of tone colour, which is almost orchestral, is obtained; and when both choirs unite in solid eight-part harmony, the result is imposing. As the Germans are usually not sight-singers, the labour involved in learning these motets is immense. The higher register of the boys is well trained. They sing up to B flat without effort, and with purest tone. The same may be said of the Dom Choir, for which Mendelssohn wrote his motets. At my last visit to Leipzig, I carried an introduction to Dr. Rust, trainer of the Thomas Church choir, but I was there just after Whitsuntide, when the yearly shifting of classes had just taken place, and Dr. Rust, who wished me to hear his boys at their best, asked me not to come to a rehearsal. Speaking generally, the voices of German boys are thinner than those of English boys, more like fifes than flutes.

#### ST. CLEMENT DANES, STRAND.

The choirmaster here, Mr. F. J. Knapp, is also master of the parish day school. Here he insists on quiet singing, and stops coarseness directly. The boys are taught on the Tonic Sol-fa system, which, says Mr. Knapp, has alone enabled him to produce his results. Some time ago at St. Stephens, Walworth, he was called upon to produce a choir in a week, and he did this, by nightly rehearsals, to the satisfaction of everyone. Complete oratorios, with band, were frequently given by this choir of sol-faists. At St. Clement Danes he had to produce a choir in five days, and here again he succeeded by the use of Tonic Sol-fa. "Our choir-boys," he says, "can now sing at sight almost

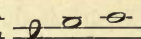
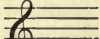
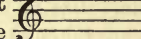
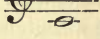
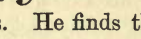
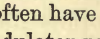



anything I put before them. We never have more than two or three practices (one only, full) for the most difficult anthems we do. There is an anthem every Sunday, a choral communion once a month, offertory sentences on alternate Sundays, cantatas and oratorios at Festivals." Mr. Knapp adopts the useful plan of "tuning-up" his boys before the morning service. Flattening, when it occurs, is due, he considers, to damp weather, a cold church, &c. But he is rarely troubled with it. The boys' voice exercises are taken at the harmonium, first slow notes to "koo-ah," or to "oo-ay-ah-ee," or to a sentence containing consonants. This exercise is done both ascending and descending, but especially descending. He also uses the chromatic scale from B flat up to F:— He tells the boys nothing about the registers, but watches constantly against shouting.

## SALZUNGEN CHOIR.

This (Protestant) choir of men and boys is well-known in Germany, and not only sings at Salzungen, but occasionally makes tours, and gives concerts. Herr Mühlfeld, the trainer, tells me that he takes the boys from 11 years of age upwards, and that before entering the choir they have a fair knowledge of notes, and can sing at sight. The voices are examined on entry, low ones being put to sing alto, and high ones being put to sing soprano. The boys have two lessons of an hour each per week, in which they practise exercises, *choräle*, school songs, and church music. Flattening, according to Herr Mühlfeld, is due to (1) bad ear, (2) imperfect training, (3) fatigue of the voice. The boys are taught to listen to each note that they sing, and to make it blend with the instrument or the leading voice. In order to do this they must sing softly, and thus hear their neighbours' voices. The 3rd, 6th, 7th, and 8th tones of the scale are, says Herr Mühlfeld, often sung flat, and exercises should be specially given to secure the intonation of these sounds. The boys must also learn the intervals, and whenever they appear to be tired a pause must be made.

## UPTON CROSS BOARD SCHOOL.

This is not a church, but a boys' school, from which a good many choristers are drawn, and where excellent results have been obtained. The boys have often won prizes in choral competitions. Mr. H. A. Donald, the headmaster, tells me that he examines the voices of the boys one by one in his own room, once a year. Those who can take G and A  sweetly and easily are put down  as first  trebles. Those who can go below  C are  altos. The rest are second  trebles. He finds that after a year a boy's voice will often have changed—a treble become an alto, or *vice versa*. In modulator practice, and as far as possible in pieces of music, he keeps the trebles above . Below this they get coarse. He never gives on the modulator an *ascending* passage which begins below this G. One may leap up, and come down by step, but not ascend by step. He uses Mr. Proudman's "Voice-training Exercises" (J. Curwen & Sons) for first trebles, and his contralto exercises for contraltos. Coarseness he checks at once, and he silences boys whose voices are breaking.

## MARYLEBONE PARISH CHURCH.

One of the best and most active church choirs in London is that at Marylebone Parish Church. The members take part in three fully choral services on Sunday all the year round, at 11, 4, and 7 o'clock. The service at 11 includes Morning Prayer and Choral Celebration; those in the afternoon and evening comprise each settings of the canticles and an anthem. The "Cathedral Psalter" and "Cathedral Prayer Book" are in use, except that the "Ely Confession" is substituted for that given in the "Cathedral Prayer Book." The strength of the choir is sixty boys and thirty men. Their work goes on all the year round without vacation, except that individual singers take a three-weeks' holiday. With the exception of a paid tenor soloist and a bass, all the men are volunteers. The boys receive a small payment. They have free education in the Higher

Grade Schools, and a bank account is kept for them, to which is entered a quarterly allowance, according to conduct and merit, thus from £10 to £80 is presented when a boy leaves honourably, this plan ensuring steadiness and continuance in the choir. Mr. W. Hodge,\* the careful and conscientious choirmaster—who is also organist of the Royal Choral Society, and sub-organist of St. Paul's Cathedral—manages to imbue his own thoroughness into his forces, and a rehearsal under him is a time for discipline, and for work arranged by programme. The boys are selected by him from the Parish Schools; he meets them every day; the men attend a sectional rehearsal for themselves on Tuesday evenings, and there is a full rehearsal for all on Friday evenings. Some of the boys are practised between 12 and 2 o'clock, others after 4.30, thus avoiding ordinary school hours. They are divided for practice into small classes meeting in the church buildings. Their places are determined by age, size, and voice (treble or alto). At the practice the boys take their decani and cantoris sides, the piano dividing them, and the master individualising every voice. A class of ten to fifteen is best for this, as it is important to know all about a boy, to join in his play, and get to know what he likes. At holiday time, the boys are sent in batches to Brighton, spending Monday to Friday there; and they have day trips down the river; also a Christmas party; and prizes are awarded for perfect attendance, voice improvement, and care of voice and health. They belong, too, to an athletic club, gymnasium, technical classes, evening classes, and a social club connected with the church. Probationers are taken as young as five or six years of age, not without protest from people who ask, "What is the use of having these babies?" But the most valuable boys, those who know their music and are safe and reliable, are those who began very early. The clear articulation of the choir is noteworthy, and a point is made of curing such bad pronunciation as "oi" for "I" and "ond" for "and." This is done in a rough and ready class, where the most unlikely boys often turn out well. Latent and slow to develop, a boy apparently with a bad ear but intensely

\* Mr. Hodge died in 1895.



anxious to sing, has turned out most useful, attacking leads and becoming generally reliable. If a boy comes late to practice he gets a "reception;" that is, the others hiss him. With such frequent rehearsals, the register, fining, getting excuses for absence, &c., entails enormous labour. It is not uncommon for boys to make fifteen punctual attendances in a week. Mr. Hodge has an assistant, and there is a corps of officials responsible for keeping music in order and for other duties, as well as those of the secretary. The strictest punctuality is required both at rehearsals and services. The men show great interest and zeal. A small piano is sometimes placed in the chancel, between the screen and the stalls, and Mr. Hodge sits at it during practice, or he may go down the church to listen to the general effect while his assistant is accompanying. At festivals, Mr. Hodge conducts and an assistant plays, this being the most reliable plan. The choir does not often flatten. A way to diminish flattening is to awaken criticism, and even the least boy will notice if another sings flat; it is not always the boys, however, who cause flattening. The boys are not told about registers; if they were asked to sing in the head voice, they would probably be liable to exaggeration. It is well to know what the boys are thinking, and when the choirmaster is on good terms with them they will frankly express their opinion, as, for example, "Please, sir, we don't like this anthem." A little talk and tact on such occasions may prevent many a misunderstanding. Mr. Hodge uses boy altos because of the difficulty of getting really good men altos, and he draws such boys from two classes—those who have low natural voices, and those who, having lost the upper part of their voices, are still able to sing the alto with care and without injury to the voice. It sometimes happens that boys of this class can continue singing throughout the time of change, and remain in the choir afterwards as tenors or basses. The men of the choir need strictness and firmness here as elsewhere, and the reputation of the choir has occasionally to be maintained by asking inefficient or irregular members to retire. Often with the boys fining

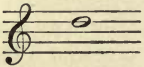
(the language of the pocket) is the only language that they understand, and if a boy shouts or forces his voice he hears of it on pay day. Nor must a boy be allowed to sing a wrong note. The quality in the upper part of the voice is almost entirely a matter of imitation when once good habits have been introduced into a choir. It is an article of Mr. Hodge's creed not to allow the choir-boys to sing in the day-school whence they come, for no two masters agree in their ways of training. When, therefore, the singing lesson is going on in the Parish School the choir-boys do other work. In all Mr. Hodge's work autocratic management is the rule; it is well to know who is to give orders. On this account he gives high praise to the rector, the Rev. Canon Barker, who accords a free hand to his choir-master, neither interfering himself, nor allowing others to interfere, though observing all that is done. Canon Barker has indeed a hearty sympathy with the music of the service. He it is who has filled the church with song.

MR. H. J. B. DART.

While he was organist of St. John's, Waterloo Road, a church in a poor district of South London, Mr. Dart carried out Sunday services on cathedral scale, conducted nine or ten oratorio performances during each year on Sunday afternoons, and by way of relaxation undertook, from time to time, to perform a "Doctor's exercise" with an eight-part fugue at the University of London. All this was done with a voluntary choir, the boys of the working class, attending the neighbouring Board schools. The choir consisted of sixteen trebles, four boy altos, two men altos, twelve tenors, and twelve basses. For the oratorios a few ladies were added, but the bulk of the work in these was done by the boys and men. I examined closely into Mr. Dart's plans. The leading features of it were time and pains. There were for the boys three practices a week, from 5.30 to 6.30 p.m. Full rehearsals of the church choir were held on Friday, and of the oratorio choir on Tuesday. The

practices were held in the church, Mr. Dart sitting at a diminutive Bord pianette, the boys being at either side. The organ is never used for rehearsal, and the piano is only lightly touched. There were four grades for the boys, and promotion rested with good service. Each quarter the promotions were announced before the whole of the boys. Mr. Dart took probationers at nine or even eight years; he usually admitted several at a time, forming a little class for them, and taking care to have an older boy present to act as pattern in the matter of tone. In voice training, Mr. Dart trains downwards, taking the voices, if necessary, up to high C in the scale exercises. Much care was shown in the opening of the mouth. All vowels were used in turn, but principally "o." "Get the right quality in the middle of the voice," says Mr. Dart, "and the rest will come." Pronunciation was constantly to the front, and in the chanting the aim was to get even and good reading. Dictation was brought into each practice, Mr. Dart singing phrases and the boys responding by singing them. The social bond was kept up by suppers, excursions, &c.

#### SIR GEORGE MARTIN ON CHOIR BOY TRAINING.

The Primer by Sir George Martin, organist of St. Paul's, issued since the first edition of "The Boy's Voice" came out, naturally possesses weight. Dr. Martin begins with a series of maxims of a hortatory kind, grouped in chapters and relating to the choirmaster, forming a choir, choice of voices, arrangement of voices, quality of voices, the place and method of practice, method, tact and discipline, &c. He gives D as the usual place of the break, which is surely  too high. Boys who force the lower register may, he tells us, be cured if they are young, say not over eight years. But later the habit is ineradicable. Boys' voices he divides into (1) the large, horn-like tone; (2) the light, flute-like voice of high compass; (3) the reedy, penetrating voice; and (4) the common monotonous voice. The sudden and unex-



pected changes which boys' voices undergo, both for better and worse, are noted. Dr. Martin says that the voices of cathedral boys are mostly acquired by practice. He condemns the use of the organ for rehearsal. The grand or square pianoforte, which allows the teacher to watch his boys, is the proper instrument for this purpose. In order to keep up a supply of good voices, he advises that a choir should contain at any given time four boys each aged 9, 10, 11, and 12. Dr. Martin's maxims are full of practical wisdom. Two-thirds of the book contains solfeggi, scales, and oratorio songs suited for boys. The first twenty-six exercises consist of ascending followed by descending scales, and will evidently need the greatest care in use. Indeed, the form almost invites the forcing up of the voice. Watchfulness, may, however, correct this. At any rate, as used in the St. Paul's choir, these exercises are productive of the best results, another proof that it is how you practise, not what you practise, that is the important matter.

#### THE DOM CHOIR, BERLIN.

This choir, formed in 1843, was influenced considerably by E. A. Grell, who died in 1886. He insisted on unaccompanied music only being sung. Neithardt was, however, the founder of the choir. He travelled widely, and unearthed much old music of the contrapuntal style in various countries. The choir now consists of thirty men and ninety boys. The men remain in the choir for an average of twenty-five years. About thirty boys, aged from eight to ten, are admitted each Easter, there being usually about three hundred applicants. However young the boy may be, his voice is at once classified as treble or alto, and put under the necessary training. The effective boys number from sixty to seventy, and, like the men, they are divided into four musical parts.

#### THE THOMAS SCHOOL AT LEIPZIG.

This, unlike the Dom Choir at Berlin, is a boarding school. The boys all enter as sopranos, and take to alto as they grow older and stronger. They often pass at once to tenor or bass.

The practices are held every week-day except Saturday, on which day and Sunday they sing in church. The school is supported by the city of Leipzig.

#### PAYMENT OF CHOIR BOYS.

Here are some plans for the payment of choir boys which are in operation in different churches :—

1. One shilling per month on admission. On showing signs of improvement 1s. 6d. per month, and so on to 5s. or 6s. per month. A small fine for unauthorised absence. The solo boys quite separately engaged.

2. Boys divided into three classes, according to merit, receiving respectively 5s., 3s. 6d., and 2s. 6d. per quarter. An additional 1s. per quarter to each boy who has not missed a service or practice. Fine of 6d. for absence without leave. Reward book at end of year. Fines for lateness, inattention, and misconduct. Advantage is claimed for the quarterly payment and the large fine for absence.

3. Boys in two grades. The higher grade receive 1½d. for each attendance, whether service or practice, the lower grade 1d. Loss of half-pay for being late. Occasional fines.

4. Taking a choir of sixteen boys with two under each age from eight to fifteen, the payments per quarter recommended are respectively 1s. 6d., 2s., 5s., 6s. 6d., 7s. 6d., 8s. 6d., 10s. 6d., and 12s. The boys under eight and nine would be probationers. Fines of ½d. for being even five minutes late, 1d. or 2d. for absence without excuse, and 1d. for talking or inattention. Tea in vicarage in winter, and trip in summer, with games clubs. The choirmaster will have power to raise the payment as the boy improves.

5. Grades founded on the vocal certificates of the Tonic Sol-fa College. Probationers, 6d. per week ; on taking Junior Certificate, 1s. per week ; on taking Elementary Certificate, 2s. per week ; on taking Intermediate Certificate, 3s. per week. Instruction also given in staff notation, which is easily taught after Tonic Sol-fa.

## A CHOIRMASTER'S ADVICE.

An experienced writer ("G. T. le F.") in the *Musical Standard* (June 17th, Aug. 26th, Sept. 2nd and 9th, 1893) deals with several aspects of the subject of boys' voices. He speaks of the space from G (2nd line) to C (3rd space) as the "middle register," *i.e.*, that portion of the voice in which either register may be used. His first advice is not to neglect the training of the chest register for the sake of a greater range of head voice. Having given separate training to the two registers, each within a moderate compass, practise the junction by training the head-register downwards. This junction exercise goes down stepwise from D (4th line) to G (2nd line). The vowels *ah-oh-oo* should all be used. When the boys can sing down they should be made to sing upwards with care. Chants which have reciting tones decidedly in one register or the other should be used until the boys are well trained, and those which have ascending scale passages in the middle register should also be avoided. Other hints are: never let the boys sing except under your direction; spend time on voice-training rather than on elaborate music; have a subsidiary or junior choir. Nasal tone is (1) *twangy*, caused by the closing of the teeth, and cured by opening the teeth fairly wide and softly practising long holding notes to *oh* and *ah*; and (2) *muffled*, caused by the lower part of the tongue being raised, and cured by practising holding-notes to *oo*, the tongue being kept flat, with the tip touching the back part of the lower teeth. *Throaty* tone is due to (1) the lower part of the tongue being raised so as to block the passage of the throat; (2) a wrong system of breathing; (3) forcing up the chest register; (4) fatigue. A boy who has fallen into the habit should leave the choir for a few weeks, and receive special attention. To cure (1) use long holding-tones to *oo*, gradually changing the sound as held to *oh* and then to *ah*. To cure (2) take breath through the open throat quickly and silently, drawing the air into the lowest portion of the lungs, and insert breath marks in the music. (3) Has already been dwelt with,



and the remedy for (4) is simply rest. Uncertainty of intonation in attack is due (1) to inattention, and (2) to the mouth not being properly open before the note is sung. To remedy (2) use a little exercise in which the boy at three successive signs (1) opens his mouth, (2) takes in breath, (3) sounds a note previously given. *Flat* singing is due to (1) fatigue; (2) faulty voice production; (3) an overpowering number of tenors and basses; (4) a too heavy accompaniment with the too frequent use of 16-foot stops; (5) impure atmosphere; (6) a cramped or uncomfortable attitude in kneeling or standing; (7) indifference of clergy and congregation to the music, which discourages the choir. Errors of *pronunciation* may be divided into (1) provincialisms; (2) mispronunciation of vowels; (3) mispronunciation of consonants; (4) the running of words into one another. A sustained vowel must not be altered while it is held. Practise holding the vowels in such words as *day*, *take*, *mine*, *like*, and *hold*, and seeing that you do not get *day-ee*, *mi-eene*, *ho-oold*, &c. Avoid also *n-amen*, or *ng-amen* for *Amen*. To get good consonants, dwell on the vowels, and pronounce the consonants, when they come, sharply and distinctly. Read on a monotone for practice some easy anthem or hymn. Let the boys sustain on a tone such words as *art*, *long*, *truth*, holding the vowel purely, and shooting off the consonant at a sign from the teacher. Slow reading exercises form a remedy for running words together. When the choir is some way from the congregation it is well slightly to exaggerate the words, especially the monosyllables. The writer concludes with a warning to the choirmaster not to attack all faults at once, but to help his boys with a bright and cheery spirit of encouragement.

MR. F. H. SHEPARD.

This author, in a little work on "Church Music and Choir Training," published by him at Bethel, Conn., U.S.A., dwells on the familiar points of relaxed throat muscles and forward resonance. To gain an impression of forward resonance, speak the syllable *aw* (as in *awe*) several times. Then speak the vowel

*e* as in *meat*. Notice that the tone, when speaking *aw*, seems to be back in the throat, while in *e* it is forward between the teeth. If the vowel *o* (as in *no*) is spoken, it lies midway between these extremes, and suggests what is the best placing of tone. The boys should begin with a gentle hum—*mmmm*. Lips closed, but lower jaw lowered. This, if done rightly, will cause a tickling in the nose. The boys then periodically open the lips without dropping the jaw, making *m-m mum-m-m-mum*, &c. Next start with the hum, singing *m-m-moo*, *oh*, *ah*, singing softly and allowing each vowel to melt or gradually merge into the next. Thus a continuous tone changes from *oo* to *ah*, but the resonance must not be allowed to slip back in the throat. The *ah* thus approached is soft, round, and musical. Mr. Shepard maintains that the resonator should be, as far as possible, in the same position for all vowel sounds, the characteristics of the vowel being produced principally by the action of the lips and tongue. The best position of the resonator is that of the full forward *ah*. When, therefore, the mouth is in the position for one vowel, a different vowel may be sung; and the vowel that is sung must partake of the qualities characteristic of the shape of the mouth. The choirmaster must of course secure a perfectly correct enunciation of each vowel, but should make only sufficient change to attain the desired end. Good resonance and large tone come from a large resonator; hence the boys should hollow out the cheeks. For boys' voices the darker vowels *oo*, *oh*, *ah*, which render the voice sweet, rich, and full, are better for practice than the bright vowels *a* and *e*, which render it brilliant and piercing. Exercises must begin with three or four tones in the middle of the voice, and for the first few weeks the boys must sing softly. Break up long tones by re-striking the note, so as to avoid stiffening the throat. Breathing exercises independent of singing should be practised. the abdominal method being used.

For production of head tones let the boys sing down the scale of F to the syllable *too* or *tee*, each note softer than the last, so as to prevent slipping into the chest register. The altos

should have a similar exercise, beginning a fourth lower, at C. This training is for boys of eleven or twelve; boys of seven or eight have more pliable voices. In going down the scale, brighten the vowel until on lower F it becomes *ah*. After a few more lessons the ascending scale of F may be tried, each note softer than the last until the break is passed. The following direction is curious: "Each boy may place his finger between the eyes as the first note (low F) is sung, mentally aiming for the finger with the voice. With each successive note place the finger about half an inch higher till with the high F it is on the top of the head." In ascending, Mr. Shepard would gradually darken the vowel; starting with *ah* it becomes *oo* at high F. Arpeggios may now be introduced, softening as the break is neared, darkening and brightening the vowels as already described. After a time, melodic figures which lie near the break may be introduced.

The less breath used the clearer and purer will be the tone. Sustain tones a moderate length of time, using as little breath as possible. In order to strengthen the vocal cords, and get a good attack without fear of violence, sing *ah, ah, ah*, each of a crotchet duration with a crotchet silence between. A little breath must be taken before each note. This facilitates a prompt beginning of each note, by inducing the vocal cords to approach closely at the moment of production. The mouth should be moderately open—large enough to insert the thumb or two fingers. After the first three or four practices it will be sufficient if ten minutes is devoted at each rehearsal to voice-building.

#### DR. BUCK'S PRACTICE.

Mr. F. Cambridge writes:—"As a former articulated pupil of the late Dr. Buck, of Norwich, will you allow me to corroborate your statement (p. 68) that Dr. Buck used to make his boys sing with closed mouth to 'hm,' immediately followed by the same note to 'ah,' in order to get the highest notes. I have found it a very useful exercise with my own pupils. I was with Dr.



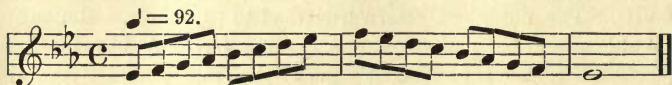
Buck during the latter part of Mr. Gaul's time, and it certainly was done then, though Mr. Gaul may have forgotten it. I do not know whether you ever heard the Norwich boys sing in their best days, but I have never heard any boys to approach them. I should say they were at their best from about 1854 to 1858, or 1859, when F. A. Mann, F. C. Atkinson, J. M. Smith, and the late John Kerr Gedge and Frederick Fearnside were choristers. It must, however, be remembered, that except an hour for dinner, the choristers were singing from 8.45 a.m. until 5 p.m."

#### GENERAL HINTS.

Mr. C. A. Harris, A.R.C.O., has an article in *The Organist and Choirmaster*, containing some practical points. A note-book at the organist's side during service is useful for registering faults. The notes are afterwards read to the choir. Reliance should never be placed on one leading boy. A boy in this position becomes the organist's master. Train others. Again, don't dismiss old boys until you have trained new ones. Be on with the new love before you are off with the old. The voices of the older boys may be going, but they know the music. If short of numbers, sing the music "full," and not antiphonally, and if the men are short let the boys help them in passages marked for men only. Calling on absentees at their own homes is useful. Be as ready to tell the choir when they have done well as when they have done ill. Avoid the error of having good tone at practice and bad tone at service. Keep a register of attendance, and post on the notice-board in the vestry a list of those who have attended no practice during the past week. An age register of boys should also be kept. To enable a boy to discover the head or upper thin register, ask him to sing the word "my" to any note lying within the register named—say F $\sharp$ , G, or A $\flat$ , above the treble staff. The note having been produced, the mouth should be well opened, and afterwards the syllable changed to "ah," thus "my-ah." The vowel "o," as in hod, nod, sod, has also been found very useful for the production of high notes.

## ST. PETER'S, FATON SQUARE.

Being kindly permitted by Dr. Huntley to attend the daily practice of the boys, I learned much about their training. There are 24 choir-boys, but considerably more than that number attend the rehearsals, the rest being supernumeraries and probationers. The boys, who live at home, are educated in a choir school at the Church Institute. At 12.15 each day they meet at St. Peter's National School, for the sake of getting a larger space to sing in than their class-room affords. The practice lasts three-quarters of an hour. On the day of my visit, Dr. Huntley, seated at a grand pianoforte, had the choir-boys on his left, and the probationers on his right. The choir-boys stood as they practised the exercise to "ah"—



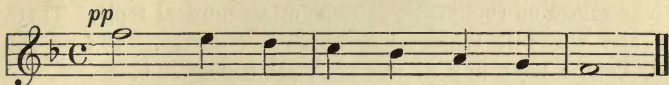
ascending by semitones until key A was reached, the highest note being then B. These were the senior boys, who had learned how to place the voice, and to whom an upward scale presented no dangers. The next thing was to sing the above exercise twice over in one breath, to a slightly faster time, about  $\text{♩} = 112$ . The pianoforte was very lightly touched during this practice, which lasted about ten minutes. The next exercise was of wider compass:—



This was taken by semitones up to key D, which makes the highest note A. Between each exercise short rests were given. The work described above lasted about twelve minutes.

Dr. Huntley then turned to the boys on his right, who had hitherto been silent, and one saw at once his admirable method of working. He uses the elder boys to pattern to the lower. Seldom telling a new boy anything himself, he works by ques-

tion, and by calling upon an elder boy to do the thing required. The two groups of boys face each other. The exercise for the beginners on his right hand was a descending scale softly sung



in F and G. Several boys were called upon to sing this alone, and if the slightest defect was noticed, a choir-boy stood and sang the correct pattern. A single boy also sang the first exercise printed above, softly, and with less power than the trained boys, but with remarkable sweetness of tone. Dr. Huntley, who admits his boys young, prefers that they should know nothing of singing. He chooses them by voice and ear. By dint of sympathy and readiness—being as it were “a boy among them”—he gets perfect discipline, while the boys look happy and interested. They sing every day at Evensong (5.30) in the church, and the choral service on Sundays is known far and wide for its high quality. The breathing-places in the music are carefully fixed—the boys often finding them out under Dr. Huntley’s guidance.

The voice exercises over, Schubert's "The Lord is my Shepherd" (four parts) was sung with wonderful purity of voice and feeling. Dr. Huntley remarked that unaccompanied part music for trebles is useful for weddings, when no men are present. The alto part is taken by men at St. Peter's, but Dr. Huntley takes care to have a few boys with low voices in the choir, for part-singing purposes. The piece which followed, Brahms's "Behold, all flesh is as grass," tried the capacity of the boys in the severest way. Dr. Huntley left the piano during some thirty bars, which included a high B flat and several chromatic intervals of much difficulty, yet when he returned to his seat, the boys still singing, they were perfectly in tune with the instrument. He told me that they very seldom flatten, and this he attributed to the fact that there is a good deal of unaccompanied singing in the service—Bach's eight-part motets,



&c. Dr. Huntley accustoms the boys to sing alone, by leaving the piano and walking among them while they are singing. Each week Dr. Huntley gives the boys a talk or lecture at the choir school on rudiments, or some other musical topic. There is also the full rehearsal on Friday evenings. Six of the St. Peter's boys sing at the Madrigal Society.

MR. F. B. KIDDLE.

At St. Marylebone Church the anthems sung by the boys alone may be mentioned, such as "He in tears that soweth," from Hiller's *Song of Victory*, and perhaps most appreciated of all, Schubert's "The Lord is my Shepherd," in which the four-part equal-voice singing is delightful. One difficulty about the boys is that they sing in the elementary schools with the ordinary classes, where naturally the standard of the church practice is not maintained. But in church music the taste is kept pure. If a boy who ought to know better sings badly, he is soundly hissed by the others. The same treatment is meted out to a boy who comes late to practice. After all, they are chips of the old block called John Bull; they appreciate anyone "having a good try," and when a new boy sings with good effect in their hearing they give him a splendid reception. The unpardonable sin is to flatten. No doubt the best way to cure it is to deem it a crime.

The great point of choir-training insisted on is that the high standard of tone-quality must be maintained, but this is not difficult when good habits in singing have been established. The boys must be quick to answer questions on points of theory, always ready to read at sight, and expert in beating time with the right hand while the left hand holds the music copy. Want of time does not permit of the ideal small class, and in fact, where efficiency is already high, such classes are not necessary.

## CHAPTER XIII.

### ALTO BOYS.

How is the alto part, in a church choir consisting of males, to be sung? In our cathedrals this part has been given, ever since the Restoration, to adult men, generally with bass voices singing in their "thin" register. For this voice our composers of the English cathedral school wrote, carrying the part much lower than they would have done if they had been writing for women or boy-singers. For this voice, also, Handel wrote, and the listener at the Handel Festival cannot but feel the strength and resonance which the large number of men altos give to the harmony when the range of the part is low. The voice of the man alto, however, was never common, and is becoming less common than it was. It occupies a curious position, never having been recognised as a solo voice. I have heard of an exceptionally good man alto at Birmingham who was accustomed to sing songs at concerts, but this is an isolated case. The voice seems to have been generally confined to choral music.

This voice is entirely an English institution, unknown on the continent. Historians say that after the Restoration, when it was very difficult to obtain choir-boys, adult men learned to sing alto, and even low treble parts, in falsetto, in order to make harmony possible.

Let us concede at once that for music of the old cathedral school this voice is in place. The churches are, however, getting more and more eclectic, and are singing music from oratorios, cantatas, and masses that was composed for women altos, and is far too high in compass for men. We may admit that because the alto part lies so much upon the break into the thick or chest

register of boys, it is very difficult to get them to sing it well. The dilemma is that in parish churches, especially in country places, the adult male alto is not to be had, and the choice is between boy altos, and no altos at all.

There is no doubt, moreover, that the trouble of voice-management in boy altos can be conquered by watchfulness and care. At the present time there are, as the information I have collected shows, a number of very good cathedral and church choirs in which the alto part is being sustained by boys.

The following is from Mr. James Taylor, organist and choirmaster of New College, Oxford\*—

“New College, Oxford, *Dec. 13, 1890.*

“Dear Sir,—In reply to your letter, I can confidently recommend boy altos in parish or other choirs, provided they are carefully trained. We have introduced them into this choir for more than two years, and the experiment has fully come up to my expectations. We still retain two men altos in our choir, which now consists of the following:—Fourteen trebles, four boy altos, two men altos, four tenors, and four basses. I find boy altos very effective in *modern* church music, such as Mendelssohn’s anthems, &c., where the alto part is written much higher than is the case in the old cathedral music.

“Yours very truly,

“JAMES TAYLOR.”

Dr. Garrett,†organist of St. John’s College, Cambridge, writes:—

“5, Park Side, Cambridge, *Dec. 12, 1890.*

“Dear Mr. Curwen,—I have had boy altos only in my choir for some years. I introduced them of necessity in the first instance. The stipend of a lay clerk was too small to attract any other than a local candidate, and no suitable man was to be found. If I could have really first-class adult altos in my choir I should not think of using boys’ voices. At the same time there are some advantages on the side of boys’ voices.

\* Mr. Taylor died in 1900.      † Dr. Garrett died in 1897



"I. Unless the adult alto voice is really pure and good, and its possessor a skilled singer, it is too often unbearable.

"II. Under the most favourable conditions it is very rare, according to my experience, to find an alto voice retaining its best qualities after middle age.

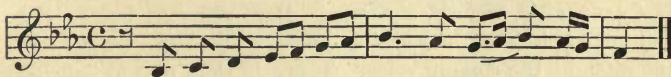
"III. The alto voice is undoubtedly becoming rare.

"On the other side you have to consider :—






"I. The limitation of choice in music, as there is a good deal of 'cathedral music' in which the alto part is beyond the range of any boy's voice.

"II. A certain lack of *brightness* in the upper part of such trios as those in 'By the waters of Babylon' (Boyce) 'The wilderness' (Goss), and many like movements.

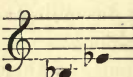
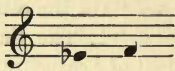
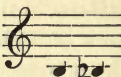
"As regards the break question, the advantage, in my experience, is wholly on the boys' side. A well-trained boy will sing such a solo as 'O thou that tellest,' or such a passage as the following without letting his break be felt at all :



For Thou hast been my hope, hast been my hope.

This passage,\* which is from the anthem, 'Hear my crying,' by Weldon, I have heard sung by an adult alto, who broke badly between E flat and F. The effect was funny beyond description. In fact, if a boys' break is about C or D (3rd space or 4th line), and he  is never allowed to practise above that, there will be  no question of break arising. My alto boys can get a good  round G, and five out of the six can go up without break to C.  The advantage of this in chanting the Psalms is  obvious. What can an adult alto be expected to do in a case where the reciting note is close to his break? These are considerations which may fairly be taken into account even when the decision is to be made between *possible* courses; when there *is* a choice. In

\* I have transposed the passage from the alto clef.—J. S. C.

many cases there is none. It must be (as you say) boy alto, or no alto. I am quite sure that careful training is all that is needed to make boy altos most efficient members of a choir. Or rather, I ought to say that careful selection and training are both needed. To take a young boy as an alto because he happens to have three  or four raucous notes from, say, B flat to E flat  while he has a bad break between E flat and F is, of course, to court failure. I prefer taking a boy whose break lies higher, and training his voice downwards. If, as a  probationer, he can get a fairly good round B natural or B flat; lower notes can certainly be produced as he grows older.

"Yours very truly,

"GEORGE GARRETT."

A remark may be interposed here that from a physiological point of view we must expect voices of different pitch in boys, just as in girls, women, and men. Boys differ in height, size, and in the pitch of the speaking voice, which is a sure guide to the pitch of the singing voice. There is thus no physiological ground for supposing all boys to be trebles.

The following letter is from the Rev. W. E. Dickson, formerly Precentor of Ely:—

"The College, Ely, *October 30th*, 1890.

"Dear Sir,—I have much pleasure in replying to your note. If I resolved to do so in a few words I should be obliged to say that seldom indeed do I hear boy altos sing with sweet voices and true intonation, either in my own country, or in those foreign countries in which I am in the habit of taking my holidays.

"But I should like to be allowed to explain that, in my opinion, the coarseness (at any rate) of boy-altos in English choirs is due to mismanagement by the choirmaster. His usual plan is to turn over to the alto part boys who are losing their upper notes by the natural failure of their soprano voices.

This saves trouble, for such boys probably read music well enough, and they are simply told to 'sing alto,' and are left to do so without further training, until they can croak out no more ugly noises. Surely this is quite a mistake. Am I not right in maintaining that a perfect choir should consist of

FIRST TREBLES

TENORS

SECOND TREBLES

BASSES

well balanced as to numbers, and all singing with pure natural quality? If I am, then it follows that the second trebles should be precisely equal to the firsts in number and strength, and should include boys of various ages, as carefully selected and as assiduously trained as the others. I cannot but think—and, indeed, I perfectly well know—that where this has been done by a skilful teacher, whose heart is in his work, boy altos have been made to sing with sweetness and accuracy.

“You will probably agree with me—though this is quite by the way—that secular music should be largely used by such a teacher. The part-songs of Mendelssohn, for instance, should be trolled out by the two sets of boys, who may even interchange their parts at practice with the best results. But of course this is said only in reference to choirs of a high class.

“I do not deny that even the best teaching and the best management will not secure quite the same *timbre* which you get in choirs with falsetti in the alto part. A certain silvery sweetness is obtained from these voices to which our English ears have become accustomed, and which we should miss if boys, however well-trained, took their places. In the *Preces*, *Versicles*, *Litany*, &c., of the English Choral Service, we should be conscious of a loss. In cathedrals, too, the complete shelving of some or even many compositions, favourites by long association, if not by intrinsic merit, would be inevitable. But I am unable to doubt for a moment that when the change had been made, and time had been given for the new order of things, under a thoroughly competent musician, we should not regret it.

“At Ely we have ten men in daily attendance; fourteen



on Sundays. We keep twenty boys in training. If this vocal body were thus distributed :—

10 FIRST TREBLES                      5 TENORS (6 on Sunday)

10 SECOND TREBLES                  5 BASSES (8 on Sunday)

we should certainly be stronger and healthier in tone and quality than we are now, with a disproportionate number of trebles, thus :—

20 TREBLES                                  3 [4] TENORS

3 [4] ALTOS                                  4 [6] BASSES

As to rustic choirs in village churches, I fear the case is hopeless, and I myself should be glad to see editions of well-known hymn-tunes and chants in three parts only—treble, tenor, and bass. Handel wrote some truly grand choruses in three parts in his ‘Chandos Anthems.’ But his tenor part is not for every-day voices !

“Believe me, truly yours,

“W. E. DICKSON.”

The following, from Dr. Haydn Keeton, organist of Peterborough Cathedral, is against boy altos :—

“Thorpe Road, Peterborough, *December 12th*, 1890.

“Dear Sir,—I have had about eighteen years’ experience with alto boys, and although I have had some exceedingly good ones, one or two as good as it is possible, I think, to have, yet I must say that, in my opinion, it is a bad system to substitute boys for men, especially in cathedral music. The reason why the change was made here was that about the year 1872 three of our men altos were failing, and I happened to have three boys with good low voices, who took alto well. In consenting to this change I had no idea of its being a permanent one, but owing to the agricultural depression our Chapter have been quite prevented doing what they would like to do with the choir. The general effect of the change has been this—that I have been always weak in trebles. We are limited to Peterborough for our choristers, and, as a rule, there is not one boy in a hundred who knows even his notes when he enters the

choir. It takes from eighteen months to two years for a boy to learn his work, and it is not until a boy is at least twelve that one can turn him into an alto. The result is that four of my senior boys have to be turned into altos, and I am left with a preponderance of young, inexperienced boys as trebles. At the present time I have twelve trebles, eight of whom are quite young.

"In addition, see what extra work is involved in teaching the boys to sing alto. Some boys do not take to alto very easily, and the extra work given to the altos means that quantity taken from the trebles. I am unable, in consequence, to give the necessary time to the elementary work that one ought to give. We can only get one hour's practice in the day, owing to the boys going to school.

"Then, again, as to tone. The tone of a choir with men altos, if they are at all fairly good, is so much superior to one with boy altos. In cathedral music so many anthems and services have trios for A.T.B. There is not one boy in a thousand who can sing the trio in 'O where shall wisdom' (Boyce) with a tenor and bass effectively. And how many there are similar to that!

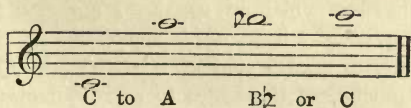
"I do not see how boys could work at all in ordinary parish choirs, for here there are not the opportunities of teaching boys to read well at sight. It is only by daily practice that one can make anything of boys.

"Yours faithfully,

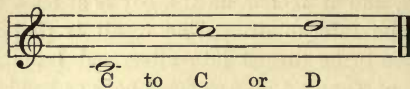
"H. KEETON."

Dr. Frank Bates, organist of Norwich Cathedral, has favoured me with a copy of a paper on the boy's voice, in which he says:—

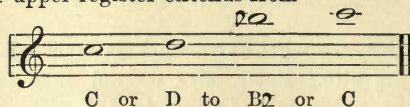
"The compass of a boy's voice when properly developed is from



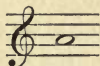
The chest or lower register extends from



The head or upper register extends from



No fixed compass can possibly be given to the different registers, as the older a boy becomes the lower the change occurs; the head register often being used as low down as A."

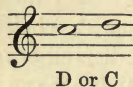


In a letter to me Dr. Bates says:—

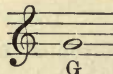
"I quite think that, for ordinary parish church services, the effect of boy altos, if properly taught, is all that one can desire."

In reply to my remark that the break comes in so awkwardly for boy altos, Dr. Bates says:—

"I fail to understand the reason you quote for the non-usage of boy altos. There is no change whatever in a boy's voice, *in its normal state*, until is reached. If the change is made lower down all the brilliancy is taken out of a boy's voice.



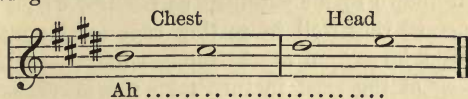
As a boy gets older he uses the upper register much lower down. I have known boys at the age of eighteen with lovely top notes but very poor chest register. In such cases, when a boy's top register commences at I can quite understand the difficulty."



There is evidently some conflict of nomenclature here, as the limits of the registers as given by Dr. Bates differ considerably from those which are usual. I am glad to learn that Dr. Bates is writing a book on "The Voices of Boys," which will no doubt clear up the subject. In the paper before me he recommends practice of the scales to such syllables as La, Fa,



Ta, Pa, in order to bring the tone well to the front of the mouth, and reinforce it by means of the soft upper palate. He recommends the teacher to train the boys to use the upper register by making them sing over and over again, *very softly*, the following notes :—



Here again the transition seems to me to be taken much too high.

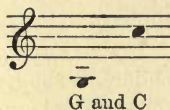
Mr. Frank Sharp, of Dundee, trainer of the celebrated children's choir, which has sung the treble and alto parts, both solos and choruses, of *Messiah*, *St. Paul*, and many cantatas, writes to me :—

“In part-singing where there are boy trebles, the adult male alto voice has its charms. The contrast in quality between the open tone of the boys' voices and the condensed, sometimes squeaky sweetness of the man alto does not affect the blending, and helps the distinctness of parts. Considering the growing scarcity of this latter voice, why not use boy altos? They can be made as effective as ordinary women altos, but they are as short-lived and need more attention than the boy trebles. Their chief drawback is a tendency to produce tone without the least attention to quality or effect save that of noise. Nevertheless, there is nothing to hinder boy altos doing all that is necessary, or, indeed, all that can be done by the adult male alto. I have trained boys to sing alto in *Messiah*, *St. Paul*, and equally trying music, during the past twenty years, and anyone else who keeps the girl's alto voice before him as a model can do the same. The boy alto voice may be said to have a husk and a kernel: the one strident, harsh, and overpowering; the other sweet, and, with use, rich and round. The average healthy boy, with his exuberant love of noise, will naturally give the husk, but the skilful voice-trainer will only accept the kernel, evolved from right register.

good *timbre*, and proper production. Seeing and hearing a process in voice-training is, however, more satisfactory than much writing and the reading thereof."

Mr. W. W. Pearson, master of a village school in Norfolk, who is well-known by his excellent part-songs, writes to me:—

"I succeed very well in getting boys to sing alto because I always use a large number of exercises in two parts, making each division of the class in turn take the lower part. I do not choose boys for altos on account of age. That, in my opinion, has nothing to do with it. I choose them by quality of voice. There is no break in the voice of the natural alto between—  
I find altos out generally when they are novices, by hearing them trying to sing with the others, and dropping down an octave in high passages."

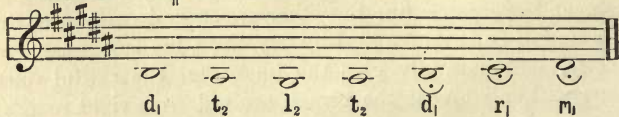


G and C

The following interesting notes are by Mr. W. Critchley, organist, choirmaster, and schoolmaster in the village of Hurst, near Reading:—

"I do not choose the elder boys as altos, as I find that treble boys, as a rule, are at their very best just before the change of voice. And moreover, when that change begins, the voice is so uncertain in its intonation that if the boy were put to sing alto he would be certain to drag the others down. At present I have one or two boys with round, mellow voices, who are very effective. Unfortunately, most of the alto parts in hymn-tunes and chants hover about the place where the break in the voice occurs, and it requires a lot of practice to conquer the difficulty. As a rule, I get the alto boys to sing in the lower register. It is very seldom they get a note which they cannot take in this register, so I train it up a little, thus—


KEYS **B** to **F#**.



I do not see any other way of getting over the uncertainty in the boy alto voice. It is merely a matter of time and trouble."

Mr. J. C. E. Taylor, choirmaster of St. Mary's, Penzance, and head-master of the National School, says:—

"I have had one or two pure alto voices, and these are the best, but very rare. Good voices of trebles unable to take (D) have often become fair alto voices, and my present solo alto boy is one of these. The trios in the anthems are taken by boy alto, tenor, and bass. These alto boys are practised from lower G to C— up and down, minding their *p*'s and *f*'s. My



trebles, as a rule, last until fifteen years of age, and altos until sixteen, and even seventeen."

Mr. A. Isaac, choirmaster of a church in Liverpool, says:—

"For the last twenty years I have been continuously engaged with male voice choirs in connection with churches too poor to pay for adult help, and, as you may readily guess, I have never yet had the good fortune to secure, for any length, the services of gentlemen who could sing falsetto effectively. I have had, therefore, to rely solely upon my boys for the alto part. At the present time my choir, which is allowed to be up to the mark amongst local Liverpool churches, is made up of 22 boys (18 treble and 4 alto) paid, and 14 adults (5 tenors and 9 basses) voluntary. There is, I find, no royal road to the alto part. My course is as follows. I obtain my boys as soon as they are eleven, by which age they have been made fairly familiar at my school with the old notation on the movable *do* plan. Theoretical instruction is continued side by side with special voice-training exercises. Occasionally I meet with a boy who has a true mezzo-soprano voice, and he is a treasure, but in the main my selections are boys with treble voices. As soon as a treble shows signs of voice breaking, I let him down into the alto part. The transition is not very difficult, for by this time the boy has become a fairly good Sol-faist and reader. I have but to adapt the voice-training exercises to him in



company with his fellows, and I have no reason to regret the issue. I take my boys always together, with two-part exercises."

Mr. Stocks Hammond, organist and choirmaster of St. Barnabas, Bradford, in a published paper on "Boys' Voices," says:—

"During many years of choir training, I have experienced very great difficulty in supplying the alto parts with *good* men's falsetto voices (especially in voluntary choirs), and I have therefore been compelled to have that part sung by boys, and experience leads me to prefer the boys' voices to men's, unless, indeed, they are real alto voices, which are seldom to be met with. I have never yet had any great difficulty in finding boys' voices capable of sustaining that part, and can always fill up any gaps that occur by the following means. Whenever I find a treble begins to experience a difficulty in singing the upper notes, and that in order to sing them he must strain his voice, immediately he is put to sing alto, which he is in most cases able to do for one or two years, and during that time he is thus retained as a useful member of the choir; for otherwise he would very soon have been lost to it entirely, for nothing hastens so much the breaking of the voice as the habit of unduly straining it."

Mr. T. H. Collinson, Mus.B., organist of St. Mary's Cathedral, Edinburgh, writes to me:—

"Boy altos are a fraud and a deception, as a rule, though occasionally one meets with a natural contralto at an early age. Even then he can generally be worked up to treble by gentle treatment, developing the middle and falsetto registers."

In order to get to the bottom of this subject, I invited correspondence in the *Musical Standard*, and several interesting letters were the result. Mr. R. T. Gibbons, F.C.O., formerly organist of the Grocers' Company's Schools, where excellent performances of operettas are given, wrote:—

“As soon as a boy’s voice reaches only E $\flat$  he is drafted into the altos, and that preserves his voice much longer.”

To this statement Mr. Fred. Cambridge, organist of Croydon Parish Church, took exception. He said:—

“I do not wish to appear to dogmatise, but I should say ‘as soon as a boy’s voice reaches only E $\flat$ ,’ it is quite time he left off singing altogether, *i.e.*, if his voice has previously been a treble. I know it is the custom in some choirs to make a boy sing alto as soon as his voice begins to break. In my opinion, such a course is utterly wrong. It is not only injurious to the boy’s voice, but very unpleasant for those who have to listen to it.

“In a school of 500 boys, there ought to be no difficulty in finding sufficient natural altos, without having to rely on broken-voiced trebles.

“In my own choir I frequently admit altos at 10 or 11 years of age, with the result that I get five or six years’ work out of them, and the latter part of their time they are available for alto solos.

“I think (and I speak from upwards of 30 years’ experience) that if Mr. Gibbons will try this plan, he will find it much more satisfactory than drafting his trebles into the altos as soon as their voices begin to break.

“I do not enter into the question of men *versus* boy altos, because it is my experience that in a voluntary choir, especially in the country, a really *good* adult alto is such a *rara avis*, that one is obliged to rely on boys, and if they are carefully chosen and trained, they are, I think, quite satisfactory. The only place when one misses the man alto voice is in anthems with a verse for A.T.B., such as ‘Rejoice in the Lord’ (Purcell), ‘The Wilderness’ (Goss), &c.”

Mr. C. E. Juleff, organist of Bodmin Parish Church, wrote:—

“Allow me to say that I have found men altos infinitely preferable to those of boys. In short, one good man alto I

have experienced to be equal to half-a-dozen boy altos as regards tone; and in respect to phrasing and reading I have found men altos decidedly superior. The two gentlemen altos who were in my choir at SS. Michael and All Angels, Exeter, were acknowledged by London organists to be 'second to none' in the provinces."

On the other hand, Mr. Thos. Ely, F.R.C.O., of St. John's College, Leatherhead, gave a warm testimony to boy altos:—

"I may say that in my choir at this College I have four or five very good boy altos. One is exceptionally good, possessing a natural alto voice of remarkable richness and beauty. In our services and anthems he takes the solo alto parts, and in my opinion he is far superior to a man alto, except in such anthems as Wesley's 'Ascribe unto the Lord' (expressly written for choirs possessing men altos), in which he cannot take some of the lower notes. The compass of his voice is from F to E<sup>b</sup>."

In these letters and experiences there are evidently two underlying ideas. First, that the boy alto has a naturally low voice; second, that the boy alto is a broken-down soprano. For both these notions there is some physical foundation, because there is no doubt that the lower notes of boys of 12 to 14 are rounder and fuller than those of boys of 9 to 12. Herr Eglinger, of Basel, to whose mastery of the subject in theory and practice I can testify, from personal intercourse, distinctly recognises this. He says:—

"It is only when boys and girls approach the period of change, say a year or two before the voice begins to break, that a clear chest-voice, corresponding to that of women, is perceptible. In boys at this stage, the head-voice rapidly declines in volume and height; and what there is of middle register is not much, nor of great service much longer. On the other hand, the chest-tones acquire a resonance, and in boys a certain gruffness, which, mixed with other voices, imparts a peculiar charm to the chorus."



Thus although here and there a boy may be found with a naturally low voice from the first, the majority of altos will be obtained from older boys, who are approaching the period of change. It is, however, of much importance to watch these boys, and stop their singing when their voice really gives way, because it then becomes uncertain in its intonation, and is apt to spoil the tuning of the choir.

The idea that boys must not use the thick or chest register is also a mistake. It is the straining of this register, which produces a hard, rattling sound, that is objectionable. Boy altos have as much right to use the chest register, in its proper place and with proper reserve of power, as women altos.

Boy altos, p. 99 (Dr. Garrett), and p. 106 (Mr. W. W. Pearson). Many readers have been puzzled by the statement here made that the voice can be carried up from G below the staff to C (third space) without break. The attempt to accomplish this would in ordinary cases result in much straining and forcing of the chest or upper thick register. I cannot help thinking that what is meant is that the best boy altos are those who are able to conceal the break—who have a uniform quality throughout their compass.

## CHAPTER XIV.

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### SCHOOLS FOR CHORISTERS.

MUSIC is now recognised as one of the professions, taking its place by the side of Law, Medicine, and Divinity. Parents who have boys to start in life look for avenues of entrance to these various occupations. And there can be no doubt that to be a chorister-boy is one of the very best ways of serving an apprenticeship to music. Hear what the late Sir George Macfarren says on the subject:—

“A cathedral choir is the best cradle for a musician our country affords. I say this from the conviction, many times confirmed, that, as an average, by very far the best practical musicians, those I mean whose musical readiness gives them the air of having music as an instinct or of second nature, those who are ever prompt with their talent to produce or to perform without preparation at the requirement of the moment; those whose ears are quick, whose wits are sharp, and whose utmost ability is ever at their fingers’ ends—are they who have passed their art infancy in one of our ecclesiastical arenas for constant practice. The very early habit of hearing and performing music stimulates the musical sense, and gives musical tendency to all the youthfully supple faculties which bear upon the use of this sense. The habit in almost first childhood of associating sight with sound, written characters with uttered notes, the office of the eye with that of the ear or of the voice, which is the ear’s agent, does more in favourable cases to develop some of the best essentials in an artist, than can be accomplished by the unremitting study of after life. I say this feelingly: I had not the advantage to which I refer, but I observe its influence upon the majority of others whose talent claims my best respect.”

These words put the case with emphasis and truth. A list of former choir boys in the musical profession, if it could be compiled, would afford further evidence in this matter. Among composers the list would include Arthur Sullivan, Alfred Cellier, John Stainer, and Alfred Gaul; among singers, Edward Lloyd and Joseph Maas, while the ranks of the teaching profession are largely recruited from this source. "Literature," says Mr. Herkomer, "does not help art much. Art is learnt by doing." You cannot become a musician by reading the matter up, or listening to lectures. Musicianship is imparted more after the style of a moral than of an intellectual power—like good breeding rather than like arithmetic.

A striking proof of the fact that the chorister boy gravitates easily into the musical profession, and makes his mark there, is afforded by the history of Rochester Cathedral boys. These include the late Mr. Joseph Maas, the tenor singer, and the following organists of cathedrals, all of whom are living:—Dr. Armes (Durham), Dr. Crow (Ripon), Dr. Bridge (Westminster), Dr. J. C. Bridge (Chester), and Mr. Wood (Exeter).

These facts make parents anxious for information as to how to get their sons into church and cathedral choirs. Enquiries of this kind are constantly reaching me. I have therefore thought it well to add to the completeness of this work by collecting information from all available sources, and I have to express my thanks to the Rev. Precentors who have so readily responded to my circular of appeal.

The result is in some respects disappointing. Choir *boarding* schools are not numerous, and are not increasing in number. The agricultural depression has reduced the revenues of cathedrals and colleges, and they are likely in the future to seek out cheaper rather than more expensive modes of working. A few town churches which place music in the front, have started boarding schools, but, as a rule, the choristers live in their homes. I have no desire for these boarding schools in the abstract. I question if the boys get more musical education by living together than they do by coming for it day by day. But



the boarding school affords the only opportunity for parents who do not live in a cathedral town to get their boys educated as choristers. The day schools suit the townspeople well enough, and here and there a boy from a distance may board with relatives or friends and get into the choir, but this is exceptional.

I now give the results of my enquiries.

### CHOIR BOARDING SCHOOLS.

**WORCESTER CATHEDRAL CHOIR SCHOOL.**—A preparatory school for the sons of gentlemen and professional men. Boys with promise of voice are admitted as probationers (nine to eleven) on passing examination. The twelve choristers and eight probationers are lodged, boarded, and taught together at the Choir School. Charge £26 per annum for probationers, and £16 for choristers, plus 12s. a term for washing. Pianoforte lessons £1 per term. Boys can compete, when their voices break, for a scholarship at the Cathedral King's School. Several have done this with success. Apply Rev. H. H. Woodward, M.A., Mus.B.

**WESTMINSTER ABBEY CHOIR HOUSE.**—Candidates must produce certificate of baptism, and be at least eight years of age. Expected to possess good voice, moderate knowledge of rudiments, to be able to read and write fairly, and to pass medical examination. All boys taught vocal music, and facilities given for learning instruments. Master of Choir House responsible for their general education, which includes English subjects, French, Latin, and Mathematics. Parents must supply clothing, and usual appointments, school books, pocket money, travelling expenses, and medical attendance. Probationers in addition have to pay £10 per annum. All other fees paid by the Chapter. Application should be made to Precentor, Westminster Abbey, S.W.

**EXETER CATHEDRAL CHOIR SCHOOL.**—Fourteen choristers are boarded and educated for £12 a year, and provided with a suit of clothes each year. There are always two probationers

in the school from eight to ten years of age paying £35 exclusive of usual extras. Vacancies in choristers usually filled by probationers, not under eight years of age, having promising voices, but no pledge is given that they will be elected. Possible grants to deserving choristers when they leave; school fees sometimes paid for six months or so after the voice has failed. Other pupils, paying £50 a year, are also taken as boarders. Headmaster and experienced matron.

ALL SAINTS, MARGARET STREET, LONDON, W.—Fourteen choir boys live in west wing of vicarage under care of one of the clergy, who gives them lessons each evening, a certificated master taking them in the morning, before they go to All Saints Elementary School. Afternoon, cricket and football in Regent's Park. On Saturdays, those who live near enough can go home. Vacations—a week in January and at Easter, and 34 days in August and September. Each boy separate cubicle in dormitory. Boys have meals in dining-hall with clergy (but at separate table). Each boy pays £27 in quarterly instalments averaging £3, and nothing afterwards. Gratuity of £10 when voice breaks. No boy received unless parents wish him to be brought up in Church of England. Correct ear and brilliant voice count more at examination than knowledge of music. Apply Vicar.

CHAPEL ROYAL, ST. JAMES'S PALACE.—The ten choristers reside with Master. Free board and education, and greater part of clothing. Grant of from £30 to £40 on leaving choir if conduct good. Latin, French, Mathematics, and usual English subjects.

OXFORD, MAGDALEN COLLEGE SCHOOL.—Sixteen choristers, board and education free. Admitted by open competition. The school is not confined to choristers; it contains at present 70 boys, many of whom pass on to the University.

OXFORD, NEW COLLEGE.—Eight senior and eight junior choristers take part in the services. These all receive free education at the College School, but provide their own books. They are prepared for Oxford Local Examinations, the College

paying fees. Choristers, not more than sixteen in number, are boarded in the School House with the master. These are arranged in two divisions according to musical ability. The first division boarded free, the second division pays about 6s. a week for the 40 weeks of the school year. Some fees paid to senior boys and boys of special value as soloists. Choristers whose parents reside in Oxford receive from £1 to £6 a year, according to merit and seniority. A stipend may be assigned by the College to a boy of unusual musical abilities.

LINCOLN MINSTER.—Boys boarded and educated at Northgate Schools at expense of Chapter. English subjects, French, Latin, German, Drawing, Shorthand, Chemistry. All school books found. Parents pay travelling, clothing, and washing only. Small allowance of pocket-money. Four weeks' holiday in the year.

RIPON CATHEDRAL CHOIR SCHOOL.—Day boys under 14, £6 per annum; over 14, £8. Boarders under 12, £40 per annum; over 12, £45. Laundress, £2. Usual subjects, including modern languages and science. Instrumental music extra. Four choral scholarships at £30, eight at £25, and six for probationers at £20. Pupils prepared for University Local Examinations, Preliminary Law, and Medical, &c. Playground, workshop, cricket field, library, school magazine.

ST. PAUL'S CATHEDRAL CHOIR SCHOOL.—Board and education free: parents provide clothes, travelling, and pocket money. Good voices and musical talent necessary. Easy preliminary examination in Scripture, three R's, and Latin. Candidates must be between 8 and 10. Two or three examinations are held each year, according as there are vacancies. Course of study as usual for public schools. Piano and violin extra. Holidays at Christmas, Easter, and Summer. Weekly half-holiday. Private field in suburbs for games. Rev. N. M. Morgan Brown, Minor Canon, is headmaster.

✕ SALISBURY CATHEDRAL.—Boarding school for choristers in the Close. Sixteen boys. Parents pay £12 a year. School has also some pupils who are not choristers. Usual subjects of



secondary school. The master is a Minor Canon. Boys admitted by competition; those from diocese of Salisbury preferred.

THE VICAR'S CHOIR SCHOOL, HULL.—Intended for the choristers of Holy Trinity Church. School fee, £10 10s. per annum. Boarders, £40 per annum. Ten scholarships of the value of £10 10s., ten value £8 8s., and twenty value £5 5s. Amount of scholarship deducted from boarding fee in case of those who are admitted into choir. Thirteen weeks' holiday during the year.

✕ OXFORD, CHRIST CHURCH CATHEDRAL SCHOOL.—Boys are all sons of clergymen or other professional men. Eight choristers educated, boarded, and lodged free of expense. Eight probationers, who, if approved, become choristers as vacancies occur. Probation usually from  $1\frac{1}{2}$  to 2 years. Probationers board and lodge in the Choir House, and pay £25 a year. A few extras, and a fee of £3 3s. on election of probationer to choristership. Every boy is, if possible, passed through the Oxford Local Examinations. Month's holiday in summer, and short leave of absence after Christmas and Easter, if particularly desired. Election by competition after trial of voice and ear.

✕ WINCHESTER CATHEDRAL.—Sixteen choristers sing in the services. These receive education free, a clothing gratuity of £5 a year, and a leaving gratuity of from £5 to £20, according to merit and length of service. There are four boarding scholarships, which leave the parents only £5 a year to pay. Six of the choristers are foundation boys. Of these, the two seniors receive £4 a year, and the two juniors £2 a year, but boarding scholarships and foundation money are not given to the same boys. There are also four to eight probationers who supply vacancies, if on second trial their voices are approved. These receive free education. There are sixty boys in the school.

TENBURY, ST. MICHAEL'S COLLEGE.—Founded by the late Rev. Sir Frederick Gore-Ouseley in 1856. There are eight choristers, boarded and educated free. Also eight probationers, from whom the choristers are selected, who pay 30 guineas

a year. Commoners, *i.e.*, boys who do not hold scholarships, and are not probationers, pay 60 guineas a year; two or more brothers 55 guineas a year. Preference is given only in cases of equality in all elections to the sons of clergymen. Thirteen weeks' holiday in the year. Sound classical and mathematical education, to fit for scholarships and the higher forms at public schools. Healthy situation, in country.

### EDUCATION ONLY.

BRISTOL CATHEDRAL.—Boys attend Cathedral Grammar School, where there are 100 boys. Payments made to choristers after a period of service, and a bonus at the end of their time.

GLOUCESTER CATHEDRAL.—Boys educated and paid up to £10 per annum

ST. ASAPH.—Three boys educated at County School.

WELLS.—Boys educated at Cathedral Grammar School.

YORK.—Boys sent to Archbishop Holgate's School

TRURO.—Probationers, after serving at least three months, may be admitted choristers, and receive free education and a quarterly gratuity. Every chorister, of whom there are twenty, has a scholarship at the Grammar School.

ALL SAINTS, CLIFTON.—Choir school for the choristers of All Saints Church, who can be prepared for public schools or commercial life. There are twenty full choristers, who pay no fees, and four probationers who pay 2 guineas a term. Choristers receive their education in return for their services. Choristers may remain at the school after voices break, at discretion of headmaster. Holidays at Summer, Christmas, and Easter. The school is open to boys generally, whether choristers or not.

THE DUKE OF NEWCASTLE'S CHOIR SCHOOL, CLUMBER.—Free lodging, board, and education are offered to a limited number of sons of clergymen and gentlemen in return for singing in the choir of Clumber Church. The choristers live entirely in the Chaplain's house, and under his charge. They are educated by the Duke's Chaplain, who is a graduate of Oxford, and was formerly Precentor and Master of the Choir School at All

Saints', Margaret Street, London. There is also an assistant master under his direction. Candidates for admission will receive notice of place and date of trial of voice, in London or elsewhere. They should be between the ages of nine and eleven. Apply to Rev. W. F. B. Ward, Clumber Parsonage, Worksop.

FROME, SOMERSET.—St. John's College. The choir boarding school founded by Rev. W. J. E. Bennett has been given up, but one open scholarship, value £35 per annum, is still given for the education of a leading choir-boy. Boys attending the school, if their voices are good, have the privilege of singing in the church choir at a pay of £3 or £4 per annum.

ST. PETER'S, EATON SQUARE, LONDON, W.—A choir day school for choristers only, limited to 24. Competition for admission open to all. Choristers have free education, with use of books in the school, dinner free of charge on all whole school days, and tea on late practice nights. One solo boy is paid £1 per month, three boys fifteen shillings each, four boys 10s. each, and four boys five shillings each per month, the remaining twelve unpaid. An accepted candidate, in the absence of a vacancy, may be enrolled as a supernumerary, attending school, and practices and services, but having to pay for meals. Daily evensong and choir practices.

DURHAM CATHEDRAL.—No boarding school.

ELY CATHEDRAL.—No boarding school.

BANGOR.—Choristers brought up in National or Grammal School.

TEMPLE CHURCH, LONDON.—Boys attend United Westminster School.

PETERBOROUGH CATHEDRAL.—Boys educated at King's School.

CHICHESTER CATHEDRAL.—Boys taught at Prebendal School.

INVERNESS CATHEDRAL.—No boarding school.

ARMAGH CATHEDRAL.—A day school for the choir boys.

Boarders received in the Master's house at moderate terms.

HAMPTON COURT, CHAPEL ROYAL.—No boarding school.

NEWCASTLE-ON-TYNE CATHEDRAL.—No boarding school.

DUBLIN, ST. PATRICK'S CATHEDRAL.—No boarding school.



MANCHESTER CATHEDRAL.—A special day school for the choir boys, taught by a lay clerk. Eighteen to twenty boys receive education free, and four foundation boys receive £20 per annum. The Precentor likes to have the boys at nine.

LICHFIELD CATHEDRAL.—The choir school is for choristers only, twenty in number, six of whom board and lodge in the Master's house. The Precentor and Sub-Chanter assist in Divinity.

PERTH CATHEDRAL.—No school.

LINCOLN'S INN.—Choristers educated, but not boarded.

NORWICH CATHEDRAL.—No boarding school.

CARLISLE CATHEDRAL.—No boarding school.

ROCHESTER CATHEDRAL.—Boys live at home, and attend the Choir School, which is especially for choristers.

LIVERPOOL CATHEDRAL.—No boarding school.

SOUTHWELL MINSTER.—No boarding school.

ST. ALBAN'S CATHEDRAL.—No boarding school. There are a few choir scholarships in connection with the St. Alban's Grammar School, but the majority of the choir boys are scholars at the schools of the city.

ST. GEORGE'S SCHOOL, WINDSOR CASTLE.—Preparatory school for sons of clergymen, officers, and other professional men. It is intended for boys who wish to enter the Public Schools. The masters are all graduates of Oxford and Cambridge. Of the thirty boarders, twenty-four are choristers. The total charge for an ordinary chorister (of whom there are twelve) will not exceed £58 per annum, and the total charge for a choral scholar (of whom there are also twelve) will not exceed £18 per annum. As a rule, a boy is elected a choral scholar in his second year, if a vacancy occurs. There are, in addition, six supernumeraries, boys who are elected without regard to their voices, and have no musical duties. These pay about £78 per annum. The musical instruction of the choristers is in the hands of Sir Walter Parratt, and, with the services, occupies about two hours and a half each day. The school is situate in the Chapter Garden, contiguous to the Home Park, which the

boys use as a playground. The school was constituted on this basis, Sept. 21st, 1893.

MAGDALEN COLLEGE, OXFORD.—There are sixteen scholars here, the sons of professional men. They are boarded and educated at Magdalen College School, at which there are about a hundred boys. There are four pensions held in the School by ex-choristers, when their voices break. The first step is to get on to the President's list. This means that the status of the boy's parents is approved. Then, on a vacancy occurring, the boy is invited to compete.

AMERICAN EPISCOPAL CHURCH, PARIS.—The choir-boys here are from England. They are boarded and educated free in return for their services. A good knowledge of French is obtained. The Rector will give information.

ST. SAVIOUR'S COLLEGIATE CHURCH, LONDON, S.E.—No school.

From these particulars it will be gathered that the prevailing custom is for chorister boys to live at home, and give their voices in return for free education. The various boarding schools described differ much in the terms they offer, and it may be said generally that only an exceptionally good voice and a personal introduction are likely to succeed in those cases where free board and education are given. The number of candidates is so large that selection is difficult.

## CHAPTER XV.

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### THE LONDON TRAINING SCHOOL FOR CHORISTERS.

Mr. James Bates established in 1894 an institution, which, so far as I know, is the first of its kind. He began it as an evening training school for boy singers in church choirs, glee societies, and as soloists at concerts and church festivals. The institution soon became a marked success. Mr. Bates was drawn gradually into this work. For years he has trained boy singers, and the singing in Holy Trinity National Schools, Paddington, of which he was formerly headmaster, was noted for its refined quality. When, some years ago, he was appointed choirmaster of Christ Church, Lancaster Gate, he found himself in a parish which consists almost exclusively of great mansions, and has no elementary schools, Board or Voluntary. Hence a special class was necessary. He advertised for boys, and at once had plenty of replies. From September, 1894, Mr. Bates, associated with two friends, who acted as assistants and accompanists, gathered every evening in the week (except Wednesday and Saturday) a company of boys, numbering 71, all of whom lived in or near Paddington, and attended Board or Church schools in the neighbourhood. These boys underwent a thoroughly systematic course of training. The elder ones practised from 7 to 8.30; the younger ones from 6 to 7; and the solo boys had private instruction. As they were fit for it, the boys gained appointments at churches in all parts of London. They received from £10 to £25 a year, according to ability. Mr. Bates's plan was to give free tuition to the boys whom he selects, and afterwards to take a percentage of their salaries. Before many months had elapsed his boys were singing regularly at eight different parish churches in London, and had gained appointments at Westminster Abbey, the Chapel Royal, St.



James's Palace, Christ Church, Oxford, and Hereford Cathedral. He sent four boys regularly to the Madrigal Society; he had boys out every night of the week singing at concerts; his solo boys attended cathedral or church festivals (generally for oratorio work) in all parts of the country, and journeyed far to sing at provincial concerts. They even went to Glasgow, Peebles, and Edinburgh, and to many towns in Wales.

I first visited Mr. Bates's school in April, 1895, when he had been but a few months at work. It then met in the Church Room, Porchester Terrace, in the evenings. Mr. Bates told me that he likes to take boys at eight or nine years of age. "How do you choose a voice at the first?" I asked. "The great thing," he replied, "is that the boy should be thoroughly respectable, and have parents who take an interest in his progress. I don't pay much attention to the voice. That is for me to make."

And what about the making? Mr. Bates told me that he begins with the middle of the voice, endeavouring to get F and G (first space and second line) round and forward. Then he adds A, training afterwards up to C<sup>1</sup>. In exercises he seldom goes above F, but the boys have so learnt to produce their voices that they can all sing up to high C. This note is indeed required in Schubert's *Song of Miriam* and the "Inflamatus" of Rossini's *Stabat Mater*, two works in their repertoire. Mr. Bates does not recognise the alto boy as a separate voice. His boys are all trebles, but they can all sing alto, having a good compass.

The Church Room, in which the practice attended was held, was lofty but not too large, and the thirty-eight boys were seated on chairs round three sides of a square; Mr. Bates and the accompanist being on the fourth side. As I entered, the boys as a whole were singing "Let the bright seraphim," scaling up to A with remarkable vigour and purity of tone, and delivering the "divisions" with great amount of clearness. After this effort they were entitled to a rest, and sat in silence while one of the solo boys sang Gounod's "There is a green

hill." What one feels in listening to a boy's song is, that in nine cases out of ten, all the expression has been put into him, and represents the trainer speaking through his voice. What labour it involves, and how soon nature wrecks the organ! Yet Mr. Edward Lloyd had no lessons in singing except as a choir-boy, and this boy—Leonard Griffiths—may in manhood be able to profit by his training. Certainly the result, as I listened to it, was full of charm. What phrasing; what gentle pressure on the held notes; what effect here and there in a *ritard* or *portamento*! Above all, what restraint and reserve of tone-power, so that the voice was never strained or pushed, but flowed liquid from the lips. "You can train a boy's voice," says Mr. Bates to us afterwards, "but the hardest things to get are soul and sympathy." In this case he seemed to have got both.

Next, two boys sang the duet "In His hand," from Mendelssohn's 95th Psalm. The whole company now stood, and did some exercises. First, downward scales in E flat, the notes being successively one pulse, two pulses, and four pulses long, moving at about M. 60. The boys stood at ease while singing, all of them having hands on hips. The tone never rose above *mezzo*. Next, long sustained single sounds, the taking of breath beforehand being indicated by the rising hand. Tone very soft. Next, intoning on G, the boys sang the names of the figures one to ten at about M. 80. This done twice they lengthened the list to fifteen, and this in turn done twice they lengthened it to twenty. There was a choral accompaniment which helped them a little in this severe test of breath control. The exercise which followed consisted in sounding a tone, its dominant (above), and the tonic again. On the first note the voice slid through the vowels oo-oh-ah, and there was a gentle pressure as the voice rose to the dominant. This was given slowly and with prolonged sound, in rising keys. Evidently breath control and gentle production were the leading principles of Mr. Bates's work. In striking the high note the boys lowered their heads. The object was to get better resonance

and to loosen the throat and the larynx. Then followed a rhythmic tune sung to "koo, koo, koo, oo, oh, ah;"\* next, an exercise consisting of long tones sung to "ah;" next, rising scales, each note being repeated five times semi-staccato to "oo, oh, ah, ai, ee." Now the boys had earned a rest, and a solo boy came forward to sing "Angels ever bright and fair." This was not hurried, as I have often heard boys and inexperienced singers hurry it, but taken as slowly as a trained singer would take it, the tone rather subdued, and the breath control perfect. Another boy then sang Gounod's "Ave Maria," and three boys joined in "Lift thine eyes." How improving this was to the boys who listen, many of whom were "coming on," and would be solo boys in a year's time!

It is easy thus to describe the exercises which I saw employed, but those who have to do with voice-training know that the vital question is not "what exercises do you use," but "how do you use them." That is the subtlety that no printed words can convey. The constant and intelligent watchfulness of the successful trainer, the ability to recognise good tone and to know the cause of defective tone, the magnetic power which keeps the natural exuberance of boys in check without rendering them listless—all these are the qualities that issue in successful work. Mr. Bates is at so much pains to develop the voice as a whole (starting from the middle) and render it alike in quality through all its compass, that he does not think or speak much of registers. "I owe much to Behnke," he says, "I use all your Tonic Sol-fa plans. The boys, attending elementary schools, nearly all come with a good knowledge of Tonic Sol-fa. We Sol-fa new music by the movable *do*." "How do the boys know where to change the *do*?" we ask. "Ah, there is a difficulty" is the reply. "Of course, the staff notation cannot be made as easy to the boys as Tonic Sol-fa, either in time or tune. It is harder work to teach them the old notation. But I can assure you that my boys, going about everywhere, and singing music of every class at short notice, *must* use the old notation."

\*It will be seen (p. 129) that Mr. Bates has now given up the use of "koo."



Mr. Bates kindly supplied me with a valuable memorandum on his plans of voice-training, and on the special difficulties of boys, which I give below:—

#### OUR METHODS OF TRAINING.

We divide the boys into four divisions:—

Div. IV.—Comprises beginners. We train these boys carefully and singly as often as possible in (1) Breathing and palate exercise. (2) To place their tongues in proper position. (We use hand-mirrors in all divisions.) (3) To sing F, F $\sharp$ , G, A $\flat$ , A on the opening vowels, trying to get the tone well rounded and forward, taking the greatest care to impress on the boys the advantages of easy methods. Any attempt at effort in singing we correct. We practise on these notes for some weeks, relieving the monotony by lessons in counting time and singing intervals. We frequently have one of the elder boys present as "pattern" boy. It saves so much time and trouble by making frequent use of pattern boys. The solo-boys also sing to them to intensify their interest. (4) Having got the above notes round and steady and effortless, we introduce B $\flat$ , B $\sharp$ , C, C $\sharp$ , D, E $\flat$ , E, and F, and devote a great amount of time to getting the voice equal in tone from top to bottom, principally by the exercise in ascending fifths, and also octaves C to C $\flat$ , D $\flat$  to D $\flat$  $\flat$ , E $\flat$  to E $\flat$  $\flat$ , E to E $\flat$ , and F to F $\flat$ , taking care that the tone is easy, and the throat well open before gliding to the upper note, which is always sung with the head lowered.

Div. III.—We continue the practice of getting evenness of tone as above, and practise descending scales, attacking the top notes with the vowel *ha*. In this division we devote much attention to strengthening the weaker notes of the boys' voices, which are generally B $\flat$ , C $\flat$ , C $\sharp$ , D. We practise the exercise *oo, oh, ah, e, i* with the breath between each sound on these notes especially. In due time these gain the strength of the other notes of the scale of F, and we get very even quality, but never more than the *mezzo*. We never allow the boys in this division to sing loudly. We also introduce many of Behnke's

exercises on resonance, attack, and chromatics, Part I. We practise the sustained note in Behnke's exercise to all the vowels pronounced *oo* (as in *truth*), *o* (as in *ocean*), *ah* (as in *father*), *e* (as in *egg*), *i* (as in *ink*), and occasionally *aw* (as in *organ*). We continue their music, time and tune, introducing hymn-tunes and chants.

Div. II.—We continue to strengthen the middle and lower part of the voice, A to D', and sing scales, all downwards, from F' to C', and practise all the exercises in Parts I and II of Behnke. We also devote a great deal of time to the practice of Concone's solfeggios; indeed, we give more time to these exercises than any others. We also practise psalms to Anglican chants, each boy taking a verse of the psalm in turn. Hymns, anthems, &c., are learned by each taking a part, after having beaten the time and gone carefully through with the Tonic Sol-fa intervals. In this division we pay very careful attention to phrasing, refined pronunciation, and other important features, leading up to solo work, as well as cultivating a sense of self-reliance. This last is an all-important feature in the preparation of solo boys.

Div. I.—Comprises my ten solo boys. We practise Concone's and Bordogni's exercises, and the most advanced of the boys practise Strakosch's vocal exercises. These last are especially helpful and effective, but are very trying, so much so that I do not use them regularly. My principal attention, even in this division, is the even production of D to F'. These boys practise at my house every evening when not otherwise engaged. We rehearse mostly the works or songs the boys are engaged to sing. I have all the solo boys in the room, so that the teaching of the one or two particular boys may be helpful to the others. My boys get to have a very good idea of nearly all the oratorios by hearing others prepare them.

#### SPECIAL DIFFICULTIES OF BOY-TRAINING.

(1) Boys' voices change when they are 13-15 years of age, and their voices have therefore to be hurriedly prepared, *i.e.*, in

eighteen months or two years at the most. (2) Generally, the teacher has to do all the work with the boys, including their practising. The minutest details have to receive the constant attention of the teacher. (3) Boys are frequently pulled back by not being kept during the day under careful restraint. They use their voices roughly in their games, and frequently use undue effort in singing at their schools and churches. (2) Boys in London so easily cultivate bad vowel pronunciation—"oi" for "i," "aw" for "ah," &c.—and it needs daily attention to check the evil. (5) The majority of boys are wooden and unsympathetic in solo work, and thus many a boy, otherwise good, is rendered comparatively useless.

From the time of my visit in 1895, the school has made rapid progress. It came into special prominence by taking part in the oratorio choir conducted by Mr. Randegger at the Queen's Hall in 1895-1897, when it was clearly proved that boys' voices may be made to blend perfectly with those of ladies. Mr. Randegger was so pleased with the singing of the boys that he became President of the School. It now has its headquarters at the Polytechnic in Regent Street, and some of the solo boys get their general education there, as well as their musical training. Mr. Bates is now supplying boys regularly to twenty-five churches in London, besides sending them constantly all over the country. In a paper read before the Tonic Sol-fa Association in January, 1899, Mr. Bates summed up his most recent experience. A boy's voice, alas, rapidly goes, but the compensation is that boys are highly imitative, and thus a good singer infects all around him. Ninety-five per cent. of the boys who come to Mr. Bates still use the rigid, stiff throat which yields the "shouting voice." The results of this are (1) bad intonation, for the voice soon gets fatigued; (2) Bad ensemble; the tone will not blend; and (3) the want of sympathetic tone.

The "singing voice" or "head voice" Mr. Bates would carry down to D, the note below the first line of the treble



staff. Boys need not be told anything about registers. They have merely to sing in one quality throughout, and they will be right. The production of this musical voice depends first on deep and natural breathing, which must be taught by such exercises as are described above. The runs in "For unto us," "Let the bright seraphim," and "Rejoice greatly" are effective exercises in breath control, and also interest the boys.

Mr. Bates uses hand-mirrors to get a natural and easy position of the mouth—the tongue lying easily and flat, just touching the bottom teeth, the upper teeth shown. If boys have no mirrors, they may be told to open the mouth just enough to insert the thumb sideways. Descending scales on *ha*, with exaggerated aspirate to each note are now practised, the boys being told to place the upper notes against the soft palate, and the lower against the hard palate, but never frontal. The aspirate is useful in giving the boys an idea where the tone is placed. After this, the aspirate is to be given only on the first note of each scale. Soft singing is a strong point; the tone cannot be bad if it is soft. A good exercise for placing the voice on the upper notes is to use *nah*. For placing the voice and making good use of the resonance cavities, it is well to sing descending scales to *Hin-ah*. Press the tongue tightly against the palate on the *N*, and allow the tone to come through the nostrils for one beat. Take the tongue away quickly, attacking the initial note with a little explosive. The scale will then be *Hin-ah*, *ah*, &c. It is necessary also to practise on the following six vowels:—

ah or ha=as in <i>father</i> .	aw=as in <i>organ</i> .
o                   ,, <i>ocean</i> .	i                   ,, <i>ink</i> .
oo                  ,, <i>truth</i> .	e                   ,, <i>egg</i> .

The last two vowels are disposed to be shrieky on high notes, and should not be practised above F. Practise also combinations of vowels oo, o, ah, aw, e, i, as Behnke recommends, but vary one of his important exercises by making it *Hoo*, *aw*, *ah*. Since 1895, Mr. Bates has abandoned the *koo*, because he finds that

the *k* necessitates a slight compression of the throat, a fault to which boys are already too prone. The London vowels Mr. Bates especially attacks; *myke* for *make*, he gets rid of by practice on the *e* vowel, as in *egg*. *Moight* for *might* he combats by practising the diphthong *ah-i*. Individual attention is very important. Simultaneous singing covers a multitude of sins. Get the boys occasionally to sing alone a line of a hymn, or even a note of a scale. Keep an even temper, encourage the boys, be firm and consistent, and discipline will give no trouble.

At another visit I found over 100 boys seated in a small hall at the Regent Street Polytechnic, the then headquarters of the school. Churches in every part of the country now look for help to Mr. Bates, and his little men, with their bags and travelling rugs, go all over the land to sing at festivals. Seventeen solo boys are booked for Spohr's *Last Judgment* in the approaching Advent. About thirty of the boys get their general education at the school, and are there altogether. The others come to the evening and the Saturday practices. Three assistants were helping Mr. Bates—one at the grand piano, another acted as librarian, while the third wielded the baton, so as to allow Mr. Bates to move about close to the boys and listen to their individual work. In Mendelssohn's "Hear my Prayer" the solo was taken up every few bars by a different boy, all the solo-boys being well acquainted with it. I heard also Mendelssohn's "In his hand" and "Lift thine eyes," E. German's "It was a lover," Buck's "When the heart is young," and Sullivan's "Little Maid of Arcadee," into all of which pieces the boys put a wonderful amount of heart. While these solos were being sung, the attention of the rest of the boys was marked. Sometimes I could see their lips moving in sympathy. Boys are very imitative, and for a boy to listen to a song is, for him, to half learn it. The engagement of a boy for a Sunday includes his attendance at the Friday full rehearsal, but the boys are prepared with their work at the school, the organist having really only to give the finishing touches as to *tempi* and expression.

Mr. James Bates' work is a gradual development. Ever since he began to specialise in boy singers he has gone forward, and his latest move is progressive too. He has taken two spacious houses in Blomfield Crescent, Paddington. In one of them he lives; in the other one hundred and ten boys come daily to receive general education and musical training. They enter at eight or nine, and stay till their voices break. Ordinary subjects they learn in four forms, but the musical grades cross the intellectual; the best student is not always the best singer. Mr. Bates at one time worked with boys attending school in London in the ordinary way. They came to him in the evenings and on Saturdays for musical training. Now he has taken his boys entirely in hand, a much better arrangement. The boys pay for their general education. Mr. Bates has a good staff of helpers, four form masters, two of them graduates in arts, with Mr. J. Charles Long, Mus. Bac. Oxon, F.R.C.O., and Mr. W. Pentney Ward in charge of the musical side, and Mr. W. H. A. Dockerill, B.A. Cantab., in charge of the educational side. This is a grammar school. The work done is excellent; in drawing and colouring the boys specially excel; possibly as their thoughts turn towards music they embrace other forms of art. Work ceases at 3.30 each day, and the College is closed on Saturdays, so that there is time for games, and every boy is expected to put in an hour's play daily. The boys recently had cricket matches with the Westminster Abbey boys and the boys of the Chapel Royal, St. James's Palace.

In one room is a two-manual pipe organ, blown by water power. In another a piano with pedal attachment. Four boys come in and sing Schubert's "The Lord is my Shepherd," while another boy plays an accompaniment. The College supplies all the boys for Christ Church, Lancaster Gate, the King's Weigh House Church, and Grays Inn Chapel. It sends twelve boys to St. Thomas, Portman Square, and one or more to Holy Trinity, Sloane Square, Kensington Parish Church, Chelsea Parish Church, St. Stephen's, South Kensington, St. Peter's, Cranley Gardens, and twenty other London churches.



But its main work is in sending solo and chorus boys all over the country for church festivals and concerts. Many a conductor and organist is glad of the help of Mr. Bates' boys in saving him time and trouble, and giving him a certainty. During last winter the boys took part in thirty-six works, from Elgar's *Apostles* to Maunder's *Martyrs*, works by Handel, Mendelssohn, Dvorak, Bach, Pergolesi, Gounod, Stainer, and Spohr. Besides this they sang songs, duets, trios, &c., without number at concerts.

The College has attained to a magazine, *The Chorister*, which will record the doings of present and old boys, give boys an opportunity of writing, give results of examinations, and so forth. The first number gives some notes by one of the boys who went to Canada to join the glee party organised by Mr. Branscombe, and a letter from Colombo from a party of boys visiting Australia. The magazine records a lecture by Mr. Bates which the boys illustrated, a concert for Westbourne Park Chapel Mission, when the boys had the pleasure of singing and playing to very poor people in the darkest spot in western London. Mention is made that Tommy Sampson sang "Sigh no more, ladies," nightly at His Majesty's theatre during the recent run of "Much ado about nothing" under Mr. Tree. This was the first appearance of a College boy at a theatre, and under Mr. Tree's direction he was, we may be sure, well looked after.

Of the old boys, a large number have gone in for music. Mr. Leonard Griffiths, whom many will remember as a charming boy soloist, has been for some time choirmaster and assistant to Mr. Henry Bird at St. Mary Abbott's, Kensington, but now, at the age of 23, his voice has come back in so remarkable a way that he has resigned this appointment to go into training, and hopes to do as well as a baritone as he did as a treble. Mr. Stanley Marchant, F.R.C.O., is second assistant to Sir George Martin at St. Paul's Cathedral, and frequently plays the services, helping also with the practising of the boys. He has lately composed a lengthy chorus for male voices, which has been produced at the Bechstein Hall. Mr. Sydney H. Lovett, who

has been an acting organist for some time, gained his F.R.C.O. recently. As the boys can learn piano, organ, violin, indeed all instruments, as well as harmony, &c., it will be seen that they are on the high road to musicianship. Practical work in singing lays the foundation. They live in an atmosphere of music. The superstructure is instrumental work and theory. With a varied experience in concert and church work they gain day by day an amount of musical experience and an impulse towards the art which it would be hard to get in any other way.

There is no question about it, the singing of a really well-trained boy pulls one's heart about. "Sexless tone" an American writer calls it. Whatever it is it has a penetrating magnetic power which touches ear and soul. Here to-day is a diminutive boy singing "Angels ever bright and fair." His chest seems small, but his breath control and breath capacity are remarkable. He holds on a note so long that I look round to see if a boy who is standing by is playing me a trick; but no, the sound is from one pair of lungs. And when the little man gets on to a long holding-note how he presses upon it and swells its volume, gradually diminishing the force until it dies away, and a sudden catch of the breath shows what effort he has concealed. How beautifully he phrases, cutting the tone at the elocutional pauses.

Mr. James Bates has now published his plans in a primer (1907). He directs special attention to voice-placing and vowel substitution. To sing loudly, he says, is a sure way to spoil the voice. Children must learn to sing with loose, open throat. Let the larynx move up and down while singing. Do not raise the chin. Let the tongue lie perfectly flat. The tone must be reflected from the hard palate. Head voice can only be produced by easy, effortless singing. Opposed to it is chest voice or "forced voice." Head voice only should be used. Mr. Bates is willing "to run counter to certain generally accepted ideas," if he gets successful results. Hence he impresses upon children in learning to use head voice, that they should feel the

sensation of *lifting* the high notes against the palate in the roof of the mouth. By a diagram the placing of the tone for different pitches is shown. At B $\flat$  (middle of the treble staff) a change of production takes place. Singing downwards, B is placed up on the hard palate, and B $\flat$  against the back of the head. Scales should be practised downwards. To test whether the production is correct, sing slowly and gently the notes of the scale of D with a swell on each note, and see that the fuller tone is obtained in the middle of each note without altering the quality. The tone must be pulled, not pushed. As to part-singing, three and four-part songs should be quite exceptional. Teach two-part songs, and occasionally interchange parts. Mr. Bates avoids vowels that cramp and mar the tone. At least 90 per cent. of our words could be sung on the seven good vowels ah, eh, i (in), oo, oh, aw, o (on). Five cramping vowels are i (night), u (music), ow, oi, and a (save). Mr. Bates numbers the vowels and shows that combinations of the good vowels can be substituted for the bad ones, thus: sing i as ah-i, u as i-oo, ow, as ah-oo, oy as aw-i, and a as eh-i. Exceptional vowels are treated at length in the book; "much" becomes "môch" as in some of the eastern counties, "earth" has just a tinge of the ah vowel, "bat" has a modified ê, but not "bet." "Hear," "near," "fear," &c. must on no account be sung as two-syllable words. Sing "yet" as "i-et," "you" as "i-oo," "will" as "oo-ill." In voice training the use of consonants should be avoided. Only occasionally use *koo*, *te*, &c. Now and again sing familiar songs to the best tone-producing vowels and diphthongs only, omitting all the consonants. Make consonants short and distinct. To avoid indistinctness, sing g, as in refuge, like *ch*, d, as in "head" almost like *t*, and do not run together initials and finals, "made to" like "may to," or "fiercest strife" like "fierces strife." Mr. Bates recommends "air-baths" by taking in the fullest possible breath through the nose. There should be no distension *forward* of the abdomen. Places for taking breath must be watched in singing words. While expression marks help the



singer, he must feel what he sings. Sharp singing is often due to wrong breathing. Flat singing is caused mainly by the use of forced chest tone. A choir that can monotone in tune will sing everything else in tune. Only a few children have a bad ear. Remove shyness by getting each child in a class to sing in turn a note of a scale, a part of an exercise, or a phrase of a song. During the period of break boys should not sing at all. Girls' singing should be within easy compass, and quite effortless. These hints are culled from Part I (Instructions) of "Voice Culture for Children" (Novello 1s. 6d). Part II contains exercises with accompaniment, 1s. 6d. Part III is an Appendix of two-part studies, with accompaniment, 8d. The complete work is 3s. 6d., paper boards, 4s. 6d.



## CHAPTER XVI.

### CONCERT SONGS FOR BOYS.

In this list I have included songs with innocent, hopeful, joyous words such as boys may honestly sing. Words dwelling with sadness on the past, or speaking of life as bitter, I have excluded. Convivial and amatory sentiments have also been ruled out. As to the music, I have excluded songs with great difficulties of vocalisation. The keys chosen are mostly those best suited to treble boys, but the majority of the songs are published in various keys. The list is by no means exhaustive, and must be regarded merely as a dip in the ocean of ballads. I shall be much obliged to correspondents who will suggest suitable additions.

Abt, Franz	O little thrush (C)	.....
Adams, Stephen	Song of the sailor boy (E flat)	.....Boosey & Co.
Adams, Stephen	The holy city (C)	.....Boosey & Co.
Adams, Stephen	The midshipmite (C)	.....Boosey & Co.
Adams, Stephen	The little hero (D)	.....Boosey & Co.
Addison, R. B.	Violets (F)	.....Ashdown
Airlie Dix, J.	The trumpeter (A)	.....Boosey & Co.
Airlie Dix, J.	Drum Taps (D)	.....Gould & Co.
Allen, G. B.	The little drummer (F)	.....Ashdown
Allen, G. B.	The little roamer (E flat)	.....Curwen & Sons
Allitsen, F.	Song of thanksgiving (F)	.....Boosey & Co.
Allitsen, F.	There's a land (F)	.....Boosey & Co.
Almond, E.	Buttercups and daisies (D)	.....Ashdown
Anderton, T.	The bells of Shandon (D)	.....Chappell
Anderton, T.	Be with me still (E flat)	.....Bowerman
André, F. A.	A British cheer for England's King (F)	..Chappell

Armstrong, A. E.	.....Harmony (high key)	.....Augener
Aylward, Florence	.. Song of the bow (G)	.....Boosey
Aylward, Florence	Mother of mighty sons (F)	.. Chappell & Co.
Bache, F. E.	.....Childhood's joy (E flat)	.....Ashdown
Bache, F. E.	Sweet is evening's fragrant dew (A flat)	.. Ashdown
Bailey, W. J.	.....Make-believes (E flat)	.....Ashdown
Barker, Geo.	.. A health to the outward bound (B flat)	Chappell
Barnby, Joseph	.....An evening melody (F)	.....Orpheus Co.
Barnby, Joseph	.....Light (alto)	.....Metzler & Co.
Barnby, Joseph	.... That haven fair (E flat)	.....Cary & Co.
Barnett, J. F.	.....The Minstrel (G)	.....Leonard & Co.
Barri, Odoardo	.... In the cloisters (B flat)	.....Orpheus Co.
Barri, Odoardo	.....Song of the anvil	.....Curwen & Sons
Barri, Odoardo	.... The beauteous song (F)	.....Cramer
Barri, Odoardo	The child and the flowers (E flat)	.....Ashdown
Batchelder, J.	.... Up with the anchor (E flat)	.... Ricordi & Co.
Beethoven	.....Know'st thou the land (A)	.....Ashdown
Behrend, A. H.	.....Gentleman Jack (C)	.....Reynolds
Behrend, A. H.	.....The angel's promise (F)	.....Boosey
Behrend, A. H.	.....The Gift (F)	.....Boosey
Behrend, A. H.	.....Two children (A)	.....J. Williams
Bennett, Sterndale	.... Dawn, gentle flower	.....Novello
Bennett, Sterndale	.... May Dew (A flat)	.....Ashdown
Bevan, Fred	.....The drummer boy (B flat)	.. Ascherberg & Co.
Bevan, Fred	.....Flight of Ages (B flat)	.....Boosey & Co.
Bevan, Fred	.....Gladsome tidings (E flat)	.....Cary
Bevan, Fred	.... I'll be a soldier, mother (A)	.....Bowerman
Bevan, Fred	.....Peg away (E flat)	.....Metzler & Co.
Bevan, Fred	.. The Admiral's broom (F minor)	.....Enoch
Blumenthal, J.	The children's kingdom (F)	.....Boosey
Böhr, E.	.. The poppies have come again (high key)	.. Ashdown
Bonheur, Theo.	.....The King's Own (D)	.....Ascherberg & Co.
Botterhill, Jessie	.. Pack clouds away (C)	.....Lengnick
Botterhill, Jessie	.....The Lark (F)	.....Agate & Co.
Buck, Dudley	.. When the heart is young (8vo)	.....Curwen
Caryll, Ivan	.....Lazily, drowsily (D)	.....Ascherberg & Co.
Chaminade	.....Meditation (D)	.....J. Williams
Cherry, J. W.	.....Gentle spring (G)	.....Ashdown
Cherubini	.....Ave Maria	.....Ashdown
Chesham, E. M.	.....Fire (G)	.....Cramer



Cobb, G. F	Mary, Queen of Scots	
Cobb, G. F.	Versailles	Schott & Co.
Cobb, G. F.	Kenilworth	Metzler
Cobb, G. F.	A broken heart (F) [humorous]	Morley
Cobb, G. F.	Amongst the roses (C)	Ashdown
Cooke, W.	Visitors (G)	Chappell & Co.
Costa, Michael	Morning Prayer [ <i>Elu</i> ] (alto)	J. Williams
Coward, J. M.	The butterfly and the humble bee	Metzler & Co.
Cowen, F. H.	Children's dreams (E minor)	Leonard & Co.
Cowen, F. H.	The Children's Home (D)	Morley
Cowen, F. H.	Tears (alto)	
Cowen, F. H.	The watchman and the child (F)	Reynolds & Co.
Cowen, F. H.	The mission of a rose (E flat)	Reynolds
Cowen, F. H.	Psalm of Life	Boosey
Cowen, F. H.	The Voice of the Father	Boosey
Cowen, F. H.	The gift of rest (F)	Leonard & Co.
Cowen, F. H.	Bird raptures (high key)	Joseph Williams
Cowen, F. H.	Buttercups and daisies (F and G)	
Cowen, F. H.	Border Ballad (B min)	Boosey & Co.
Crimp, H. E.	Hullo! (G)	Keith, Prowse & Co.
Davies, W.	The Blacksmith	Curwen & Sons
Del Riego, F.	Happy Song (D)	Chappell & Co.
Del Riego, F.	O Loving Father (F)	Chappell & Co.
Del Riego, F.	Sing on, sweet voices (F)	Beal & Co.
D'Hardelot, G.	Three green bonnets (E flat)	Ascherberg & Co.
Dick, Cotsford	The Angel's Gift (F)	Leonard & Co.
Diehl, Louis	Dear England (C)	Leadbeater
Dunn, Sinclair	Stars of the summer night (D)	E. Ashdown, Ltd.
Earée	The Fireman (B flat)	Curwen & Sons
Elgar, E.	Land of hope and glory (C)	Boosey & Co.
Elliott, J. W.	Death or glory, lads (A min.)	E. Ashdown, Ltd.
Elliott, J. W.	Summer (A and B)	Ashdown
Elmore, Frank	Child and the sunbeams (C)	Leonard & Co.
Esser, H.	The Water-lily (alto)	Augener
Farebrother, B.	Aho! Love's horn doth blow (F)	Ascherberg
Farebrother, B.	Close as the stars [ <i>Reine d'amour</i> ] (C)	Ascherberg
Farebrother, B.	The Cloud..	Published originally by L. Cock
Flood, Edwin	The gipsy's life (C)	Leonard & Co.
Foster, M. B.	The mother's grave (E minor) [alto]	Leonard & Co.
Foster, M. B.	Solo from cantata, "The fairies of the bells"	Novello

Gatty, A. S. . . . .	Three little pigs (A flat) . . . . .	Paxton
Gatty, A. S. . . . .	One morning, oh, so early ! (B flat) . . . . .	Boosey
Gaul, A. R. . . . .	The sea's love . . . . .	Novello
German, E. . . . .	Who'll buy my lavender (D and E) . . . . .	
Gibson, Ignace . . . . .	The man-o'-war's man (D) . . . . .	Bowerman
Goodeve, A. . . . .	Fiddle and I (B flat) . . . . .	Enoch & Sons
Goodhart, A. M. . . . .	Baby seed song (E flat) . . . . .	J. Williams
Gounod, C. . . . .	For ever with the Lord (D) . . . . .	Phillips and Page
Gounod, C. . . . .	Glory to Thee, my God (D) . . . . .	Cramer
Gounod, C. . . . .	The King of Love (E flat) [alto] . . . . .	Phillips & Page
Gounod, C. . . . .	Peace eternal (E flat) . . . . .	Schott
Gray, H. . . . .	Dream of Paradise (G) . . . . .	Larway, J.
Greenhill, J. . . . .	The Canadian herd-boy (F) [alto] . . . . .	Stanley Lucas
Gyde, Margaret . . . . .	The song of the robin (D) . . . . .	Ashdown
Handel . . . . .	Angels ever bright and fair . . . . .	
Hargitt, C. . . . .	Skylark, skylark ! . . . . .	J. Williams
Harraden, E. . . . .	The violet and the snowdrop . . . . .	Ashdown
Hatton, J. L. . . . .	The cause of England's greatness (F) . . . . .	J. A. Turner
Hatton, J. L. . . . .	Song should breathe of scents and flowers . . . . .	Ashdown
Hatton, J. L. . . . .	Blossoms . . . . .	Ashdown
Hatton, J. L. . . . .	Sing, nor let one note of sadness (A flat) . . . . .	Ashdown
Hatton, J. L. . . . .	There sits a bird on every tree (G) . . . . .	Curwen
Hawthorne, Alice . . . . .	Hearth and home (G) . . . . .	Leonard
Head, Walter . . . . .	Ye birds that sing (G) . . . . .	E. Ashdown, Ltd.
Hecht, E. . . . .	The innocent child (C) . . . . .	Leonard & Co.
Hedgecock, W. . . . .	Mighty warriors (A) . . . . .	E. Ashdown, Ltd.
Hemery, V. . . . .	Let there be light (D flat) . . . . .	Warren & Phillips
Hemery, V. . . . .	The bygone days (C) . . . . .	Gould & Co.
Herker, G. . . . .	March, England, march (B flat) . . . . .	Ascherberg & Co.
Hervey, A. . . . .	May Song (C or D) . . . . .	Schott
Hervey, A. . . . .	When all the world was young (B flat) . . . . .	E. Hatzfeld
Hobson, M. . . . .	The peaceful Sabbath bell (F) . . . . .	Chappell
Holbrooke, J. . . . .	Where's mother ? (G) . . . . .	Ricordi & Co.
Horner, B. W. . . . .	In the cloisters (E flat) . . . . .	Leonard & Co.
Horrocks, A. E. . . . .	The bird and the rose (F) . . . . .	Boosey
Jackson, J. . . . .	Cathedral Memories (E flat) . . . . .	Morley
King, O. . . . .	The Golden Gate (F) . . . . .	Ashdown
Kjerulf, Halfdan . . . . .	Asleep (E) . . . . .	Lengnick
Lane, G. . . . .	Life's Lullaby (G) . . . . .	
Lane, G. . . . .	Fall of the dew (C) . . . . .	Ascherberg & Co.

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Lassen, E.	Rose time (A flat)	Leonard
Lehmann, Liza	The guardian angel	Ascherberg
Lemare, E. H.	The Waif (F)	Curwen & Sons
Lemoine, E.	The ship-boy's prayer (C minor) [alto]	Leonard & Co.
Liddle, S.	Christmas bells (E flat)	Chappell & Co.
Liddle, S.	The home song (high key)	Boosey
Liebe, Louis	The stripling's armour (C minor)	Leonard & Co.
Lloyd, C. H.	Hawke (G)	J. William
Logé, H.	A Norwegian Song (G)	Laudy
Löhr, F. N.	Suffer the little children (F)	Cramer
Lowe, G.	The old regiment (G)	Gould & Co.
Maccabe, F.	Buttercups and daisies (D)	Chappell
Mackenzie, A. C.	We'll all make holiday (E flat)	Ricordi
Mackenzie, H.	The lion flag of England (G)	E. Ashdown, Ltd.
Marks, G.	We're homeward bound (C)	E. Ashdown, Ltd.
Marzials, Theo	The fairy Jane (B flat)	Enoch
Mascheroni	Where mandolines are ringing (G)	E. Ashdown, Ltd.
Mattei, Tito	The chase (D)	Ricordi & Co.
Mendelssohn	Lord, at all times [ <i>Lauda Sion</i> ]	
Mendelssohn	The Savoyard's Return	Novello
Middleton, D.	The Warrior (E flat)	Curwen & Sons
Moffatt, Douglas	The child's prayer (F)	Leonard & Co.
Moir, F. L.	Children asleep (F)	Boosey
Moir, F. L.	He will forgive (C)	Ascherberg
Molloy, J. L.	Home, dearie, home (F)	Boosey
Molloy, J. L.	The Little match girl (G minor)	Chappell
Molloy, J. L.	The sailor's dance	Boosey
Molloy, J. L.	Dresden China	Boosey
Morgan, Franz	A fairer garden (C)	Cramer
Needham, A. A.	Wynken, Blynken, and Nod (high key)	
Newton, E.	The Drum-major (G)	Chappell & Co.
Offenbach	Spring, spring ( <i>Babil and Bijou</i> )	
Old Song	Sir Guy of Warwick (F)	Chappell
"	The Minstrel Boy	Boosey
"	Charley is my darling	Boosey
"	The Skipper and his boy (F)	Hutchings
Parker, Henry	Jerusalem (G)	Cramer
Parry, C. H. H.	The poet's song (E)	E. Ashdown, Ltd.
Pascal, F.	The playing fields	J. Williams
Pattison, T. Mee	Blossoms, fair blossoms (E flat)	Curwen

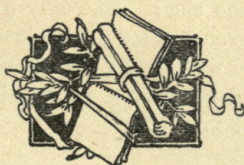


Pettman, E.	Fours, right (F)	Curwen
Phillips	Jolly old abbot (D)	Curwen
Pinsuti, Ciro	Heaven's chorister (C)	Curwen
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## NOTE ON THE KIDNAPPING OF CHOIR BOYS.

Much annoyance is caused to organists and choirmasters by boys, whom they have trained, leaving them for other choirs. Sometimes a boy will leave a poor church for a rich one, and this may be the act of his parents, who are tempted by increased pay, or in some cases of an organist who is glad to be saved the trouble of training his boys. But this is not all. Troups of Christy Minstrels often include boys, who are captured wherever they can be found. There are, indeed, companies of "Midget Minstrels" travelling the country at the present time, which are wholly made up of boys and girls; evidence, as it seems to me, of an unhealthy taste on the part of the public.

How can this kidnapping of choir boys be prevented? In considering the matter I first thought of the law of apprenticeship, and got a solicitor to state it for me as it would apply to the choir boy. But this law is evidently useless for the purpose. Even supposing it to be acted upon, the state recognises no contract by a minor, and would only give damages against parents or guardians. If these were recovered, the boy would still be retained against his will, and would probably do more harm than good in the choir. The only way I can see is as far as possible to defer payment for the boy's services by giving his parents a lump sum when his voice breaks, and making this dependent upon good behaviour. A boy leaving the choir for another would forfeit this sum.



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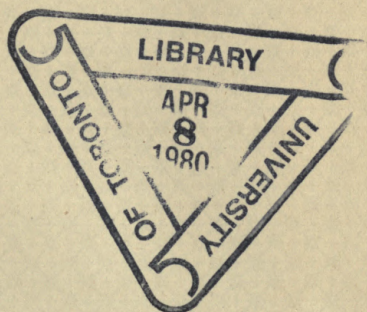
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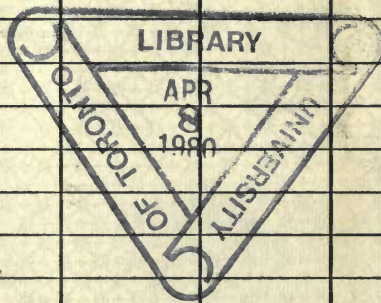
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